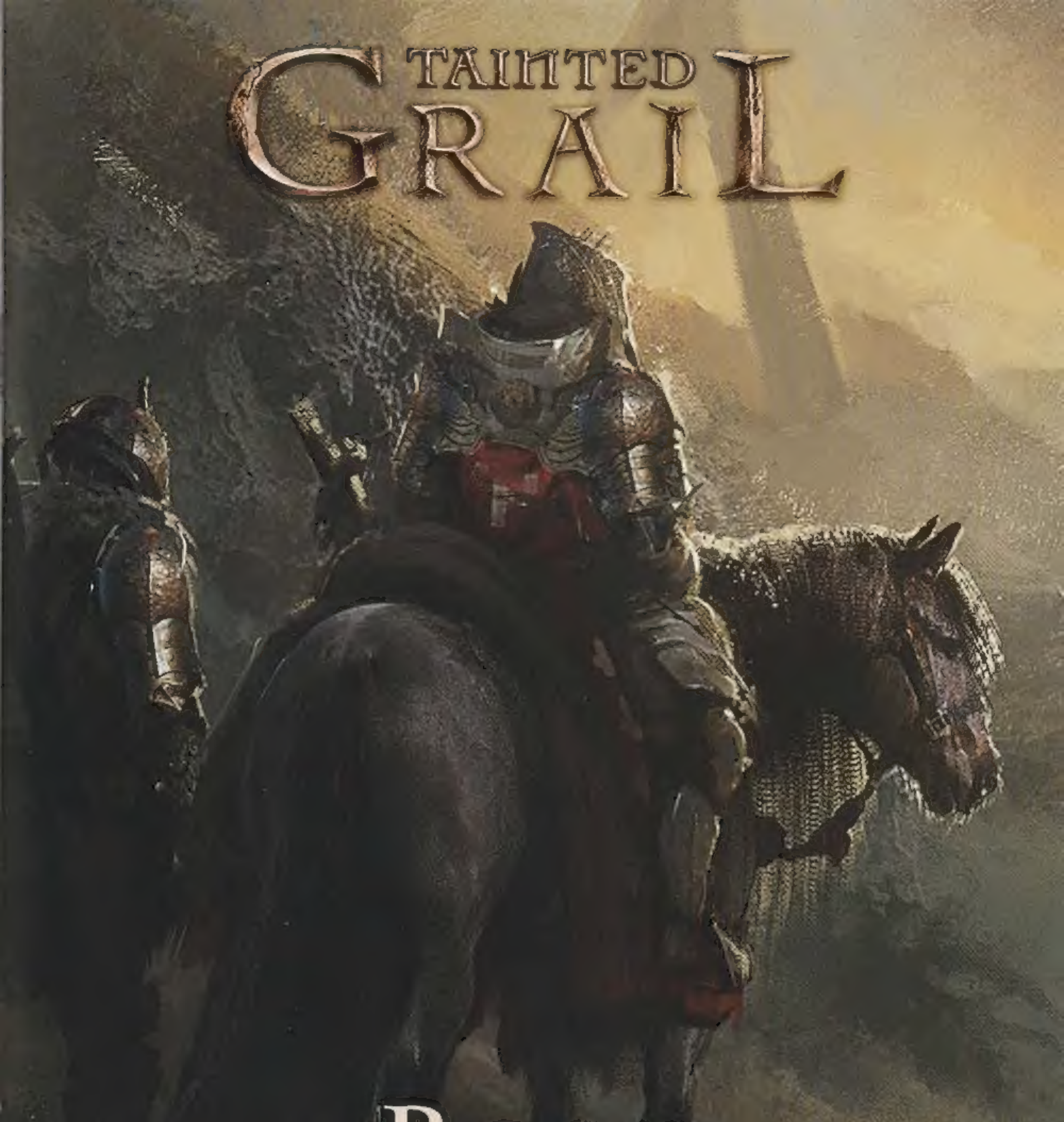
Tainted Grail



Book of Memories

AWAKEN REALMS

Echoes of the Past
Book Of Memories

Overview

Echoes of the Past is an optional expansion for the three basic Tainted Grail campaigns: Fall of Avalon, Last Knight, and Age of Legends. It introduces personal Achievements that Characters gain/earn throughout the course of their campaigns, gaining access to small scenes called Memories that expand their stories.

After earning enough Memories, Characters are rewarded with one-time Legendary Action cards that may be used to turn the tide in most dire situations.

For those who manage to uncover all of their memories, a special reward awaits: a new Advanced Ability, tied to the Character's personal journey.

Components

The Echoes of the Past expansion contains the following components:

- 52 Achievement Sheets – each of the 13 Characters has a unique sheet to mark their Achievements throughout the campaign (see "Gaining Achievements" below).
- 39 Legendary Actions – one-use cards with different, powerful effects.
- 13 Advanced Abilities – cards that contain a new ability for your Character that is added to your Character Tray.

Overview

After you finish setting up your Fall of Avalon, Last Knight, or Age of Legends campaign, but before you reveal your first Event card and begin the game, give every player an Achievement Sheet for their Character. If this sheet has any unlocked rewards, gain them immediately (see "Legacy Mode" below).

Place all Legendary Actions and Advanced Ability cards, as well as this book, near your play space. You will need them later.

Important: Character storylines and Achievements are tied to the campaigns in which these Characters appear. If you use the optional "Free Play" mode to mix Characters from different time periods and campaigns, many of the Achievements will be unavailable in your playthrough!

Earning Achievements

You earn an Achievement as soon as you meet its requirements listed on the sheet (for example: *Have 10 Wealth, Defeat a purple Encounter, or Travel to Kamelot – Location 190*).

When you earn an Achievement, mark it on your sheet and read the Memory this Achievement points to. After reading your Memory, continue the game.

You may decide to postpone reading the Memory until any moment you see fit (for example, if you want to finish the current Action or Encounter first), to avoid interrupting regular gameplay. You may also return to your unlocked Memories at any time and read (or re-read them), for example when other players are occupied with an Encounter you take no part in.

Legendary Actions

If you earn all three Achievements in a single section, you gain a Legendary Action card displayed next to this achievements section. Take this card and mark its box, so that you know you've already received it.

This Legendary Action will stay with you for the rest of the campaign, until you decide to use it. Remember to keep it with your other cards and decks when Saving your campaign.

You may use the Legendary Action at any moment in the game, unless the card states otherwise. Apply the effect of the card, and then remove the card from the game. It's not possible to earn this card or use it during this campaign again!

Final Achievements and Advanced Abilities

Once you earn all nine of your Character's Achievements (and three Legendary Actions connected to them), your final Achievement unlocks. As soon as you meet the prerequisites listed by this Achievement, go to its correlated Memory. This Memory will grant you the final reward: an Advanced Ability.

The Advanced Ability can be used just like the standard Character Action printed on your Character Tile. Please note it does not replace your default Character Action – you're still able to use it, if you wish.

(Optional) Legacy Mode

When setting up a new campaign, you may use an Achievement Sheet from a previous campaign, instead of starting a fresh one. In this case, all marked Achievements already count as earned, and you may take any Legendary Actions that you unlocked right at the start of the campaign!

MAGGOT

Echoes of the Fall

Maggot

1

Even in the midst of a dream, your body finds ways to remind you about its sorry state. There's no escape from the pain of your wounds. There's nowhere to hide from the fever burning within your veins. Sweating in agony, you keep waking up, too weak to move, before you slump back into a restless sleep. How is it possible the sun is not up yet? How many hours of this torment have you endured?

An experience like this would break lesser people, but for you it's not exactly new. You still remember the day when you decided to set aside the mind-expanding mushrooms you are so addicted to; go sober for at least a week. You lasted three nights. Three nights of agony, after which you managed to get out of your clochan and crawled like a worm through the forest, trying to find this accursed shroom. And when you had, you cried like a child, stuffing it into your mouth.

This was the day you decided to forfeit your name. A pitiful, weak maggot such as you didn't deserve it...

2

Magic rages through you like a torrent. Once, wielding even half this would have shattered your mind and left your body a tortured husk. You've seen it before. Other, weaker apprentices left broken or dead were paraded by Archdruid Wyrmtoe, thrown down before you as examples. Life, death, failure; everything was a lesson at the Moonring.

He would loom over the gibbering wrecks and corpses, forcing you to perform the rituals that had felled them, sapping their remaining life to fuel your magic. A reminder that this would be your fate if you proved weak. You'd tasted fear's bitter flavor every time you strained, panic surging within you as the burning tendrils of magic threatened your mind. Wyrmtoe always looked down on you with derision, as you struggled with rituals that he performed with ease.

His brutality gave you strength, his power — a target to aim for. You never dreamed you could rival the Archdruid's capabilities, but you struggled on, fueled by your all-consuming desire to grow. All the years you dedicated to the craft, you held him up as a paragon. But now, even the great Wyrmtoe burns like a candle before the bonfire of your magic. Your life's ambition surpassed and yet you feel no achievement. Your heart lies strangely empty, bleak as the streets and houses of a wyrdness-blighted town.

3

Before you, Cuanacht lies in ruins, torn in half by a giant chasm. A chilling thought washes over you. You still remember the day when Lord Ywain chased you out of the farmhold. He said you were scaring his people, and he'd had enough of your drug-fueled outbursts.

Before you departed for your new home, a clochan out of bounds of the farmhold, you cursed both Ywain and Cuanacht in every possible way. You're pretty sure there were some words about the earth swallowing this town whole. Those were not real spells, and they should have no power, but by now you know well that wyrdness can be shaped with a thought, a dream, or even a potent desire. What if...

You shake your head and decide not to dwell on it anymore, but the thought keeps haunting you long after you enter Cuanacht.

4

You stare at the mushroom for a while, not daring to touch it. So far, you've maintained control by adding small, dried amounts to your meals, just enough to dull the need and quieten the demons in your mind. It's kept you sane up to now. One so large could take you to a place from where there is no return. You've come close before, only emerging from your stupor days later as a babbling, disheveled mess on the brink of death.

Despite the risk, you continue. Terror immediately grips you as the intensity of the substance threatens to overwhelm you. You feel your grip on life and sanity slipping until, without realizing, you settle into a chant, using its simple rhythm as an anchor. It winds a path through the chaos. Distractions and temptations try to lure you from the path, but you hold tight to your druidic training. The teachings of the Moonring suddenly make sense. Their brutal methods were not born of cruelty but necessity and either killed you or prepared you.

Unless you experienced the horrors of the world, they would devour you when the time came.

Clinging to your chant, you move through your mindscape with purpose. You find what you're looking for. A window. Peering through, visons of events yet to become open before you as clearly as walking through your own memories.

5

The druidic ring stands before you, quiet and peaceful, betraying nothing of the horrors performed there. But you know. Here, you witnessed barbarism and suffering, memories that no amount of time, or mind-altering substances, can remove. Just being here twists your stomach and has you reaching for the mushrooms you carry. To dull the pain. To forget.

Your mind won't let you forget. It transports you to a midnight ritual at the stones. You were a young druid then, in your early days with the order. At first the chanting, fires and dancing inspired you, promising the great magic the druids were known for. Then came the blood. You can still smell its iron tang and hear the chanting crescendo as it stained the stones. You tried to leave but an older apprentice forced you back down, hissing warnings of brutal punishments for those who lack the stomach for the rituals. He slipped you a strip of mushroom, claiming that all the apprentices used it, that your resolve would toughen over time.

It helped for a while. Your vision became hazy. You lost yourself in the cloying smoke and rhythmic chant. Later on, you tried to suffer the rituals without the mushroom, but found yourself turning to its sweet escape when the blood and the suffering became too much. Soon you didn't just use it at rituals; it became the prison, not the escape it was supposed to be.

6

You're still shaking after your meeting with the Pale Lady. For the simple people of Avalon, she's just another legend, no different than wyrms, giants, or ancient knights.

However, for druids of the Moonring she was always a looming threat, one of very few uncontrollable powers that could challenge their rule over the island.

There was no love lost between the Pale Lady and your order. She thought druids were cruel fools, and in return, druids did what they could to scare simple folk away from her domain, painting her as a mindless abomination.

You had your own reason to hate her. You've seen through the lies of the Archdruids, and you knew well how capable the Pale Lady was. She could do so much good, if she decided to help humans! The fact that she decided to waste all her power languishing in some remote lake made you furious.

Then again, when druids did help the people of Avalon, in return they were hunted down and burned in wicker figures. Perhaps there was wisdom in what the Pale Lady was doing. Perhaps if you're among other people for too long, eventually they will find a reason to hate you...

7

A moment of clarity falls over you like spring rain.

For all its bloody rituals, many of the Moonring's teachings were dry affairs. They seemed merely philosophical until now, intangible concepts about nature, its cycles, and connections of all living things. Now, after travelling and experiencing for yourself, you begin to understand what the druids were really talking about. You see how all things are linked, how events ripple across nature. Felling trees on the hills may cause floods in the valley next season. Killing all the predators in one area leads to a boom in the numbers of their prey who in turn leave crops ravaged. You start to see how all life is a balance, an infinitely complex web of connections.

You see nature's cycles, life and death, not as enemies, as right and wrong, but as two sides of the same coin. The mouse dies to feed the hawk and its young. Plants die and rot to nourish the rest of the forest. Teachings that once sounded uncaring suddenly make sense. Yes, nature can be brutal, but it is a necessary brutality.

That's what it means to be a druid: not to judge nature through a human lens, but to fully embrace it. You'd always considered life as sacrosanct but, to a druid, neither life nor death holds more importance than the other.

8

You leave the encounter with your head spinning. Words have never came easily to you, but they all fell into place when you needed them. You see something of yourself as an apprentice in your opponents as they walk away, confused and subdued. You know that, hours later, the perfect responses will come to them and they'll berate themselves for being so dim-witted.

It was a wonder how you survived after leaving the order. Your tired, pallid complexion from troubled dreams and addiction already made people mistrust you. Having a slow mind and stumbling over your words did little to win them over.

Perhaps those long years living as an outcast, shunned and despised by the farmsteads, had their uses after all. You tempered your addictions and learned what people respond to, what might inspire their charity, what might distract them or stoke their anger. That was knowledge learned through bloody noses and nights shivering in the rain, through an empty belly and a parched throat. You learned or you died.

It seems that hunger and desperation had their own way of sharpening your wit.

9

"Welcome," they say. Not only that but "please" and "thank you". How times have changed now you're a hero of renown. For the longest time, just trying to enter a settlement meant being spat on at best or having a knife to your throat at worst. In a land where druids were rounded up and burned alive in wicker men, even being an outcast of that order was a particularly despised position.

You remember trying to get into one farmhold to buy eggs when two guards came to give you a pointed greeting with their spears. Brothers by their looks, each tried to outdo the other with their threats. You weren't the smartest talker, but they weren't the smartest guards either and you explained that you were only an outcast because you'd stolen the Archdruid's secret herbs. You convinced the shorter guard that these herbs would make him grow taller and stronger, casting a glance to his brother. His eagerness to become the alpha guard quickly outweighed his mistrust of druid herbs and he demanded them. His bigger brother couldn't talk him out of it and, not about to suddenly become the short one, offered a deal. They'd both take a potion and if the herbs worked, they would let you in.

You don't know how long they slept for after you gave them the tonic, but the eggs were delicious, their clothes gave you a warm winter, and their spears made ideal firewood.

10

Tuathan. Home to the Fore-dwellers and a cauldron of the purest, most primal wyrdness you've ever seen. You used to fear this power of change, but now you've realized it's not only a threat: in skilled hands, wyrdness can be shaped into anything material or immaterial.

You look upon your hands, scarred from recent skirmishes. This long journey transformed you, made you stronger – both physically and mentally. Yet, there are parts of you that prove resistant. What if you could use the wyrdness to alter them? What if you could remake yourself without the crippling addictions and anxieties?

After a while, you make a decision. You reach into the wyrdness and channel it into your very soul, rearranging its fibers, expunging the burning, unbearable desires. A lesser man would only mangle his consciousness and turn into a roaming lunatic, but you now hold powers that rival the Archdruids or Morgaine herself. Calmness begins to envelop you. The thirst fades, replaced with warmth.

Then, as everything melts into a sweet feeling of satisfaction, you abruptly stop. No! In a sudden flash, you realize you almost stopped being yourself, and turned into a happy simpleton, so content you would see no reason to do anything. You realize that if you take away your burning anxieties and crippling desire, you will take away everything that shapes you.

You suddenly remember that beneath the serene edifice, nature is in constant struggle. A mouse runs from a hawk, its heart thumping painfully. Plants smother each other, reaching for the sun. Humans toil in pain, shaping their short lives. Would you – without these pains, and desires – still be a part of nature?

With a heavy heart, you stop the transformation. The craving returns. Your hand shakes again. You decide that if you ever get rid of the hunger that consumes you, it has to be through your own willpower.

One who doesn't struggle with anything doesn't truly live.

You walk away with a smile – the same but somehow changed.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Beor

1

Gasping for air, and with sharp pain rhythmically stabbing you in the side, you stand over the twitching corpse of the wyrdspawn. You never expected to dispose of it so quickly, but its sight awoke some primal hatred that filled you with strength.

It reminded you too much of a different wyrdspawn. The one you met weeks ago, in the woods of the Hunter's Grove. The one that started your slow descent towards death. It was a malformed, beating heart on countless legs of blackened veins and arteries, with a circular maw, full of lamprey-like teeth. It ripped into your side, trying desperately to push itself into your chest. You barely managed to pull it away from the wound, throw it to the ground, and crush it with a swing of your hammer.

You do not plan to let any other accursed monstrosity get the jump on you like that ever again. If it comes from the other side of the wyrdness, it dies. You always liked simple rules.

2

Cramps gnaw at you from within as you search around for food with growing desperation. But the land does not provide. It is harsh and cruel, and you are too weak to catch anything.

These feelings aren't strange to you. They bring with them a sense of loss as you recall the last time you felt this way. The crops had failed again, and your father disappeared into his cups, blaming himself. Others in the farmhold blamed him too; they'd have to beggar themselves buying food from other farmholds. Your mother grew weak and withdrawn, forgoing her own meals to put something on your plate. Eventually the portions diminished so much you became sick, along with your other siblings.

That day, your mother took your youngest sister into the woods to forage. Only your mother returned. She never said what happened, retreating into a brooding silence when pressed. Your father didn't tolerate any questions. The bruises taught you not to ask. With one less mouth to feed, you survived the winter, but your mother was never the same again.

For years, you buried the memory, but now your thoughts go to the sister that never returned. What became of her? You desperately cling to the hope that your mother sold her as a servant to passing travelers, or another farmhold. Yet, you've never seen any trace of her, and your parents were long dead before you mustered the courage to ask them again.

3

You pause on the edge of Farshire, afraid to take another step, even though you gaze along a familiar street. You've walked it many times, a young lady on your arm. Seeing this place again, your thoughts stray to her. Times were simpler and more carefree back then, or perhaps that was just yourself.

She'd wanted it all: children, a life together, but you had your apprenticeship to think about. Life was hard enough in Cuanacht, and though your master made little money, you were learning a trade. Without that, what could you have offered her? You promised to return after your apprenticeship. Once you became a master, you'd leave Cuanacht and live together in this prosperous city. As you became engrossed in your work, your visits became less frequent until you stopped making the journey altogether.

Now, amidst happier memories of your time together, you wonder whether you made the right decision. The wound in your side aches, a reminder that you are dying, just as your heart aches that you have never experienced so many things, and now you never will.

You wonder what became of her. Did she marry? Did she leave Farshire? Does she even live? With a grimace, you bury the feelings as you've always done, hoping you don't cross her path.

4

The weight of your purse tugs at your belt. It's an unfamiliar feeling. Security. A promise of easier times. Something you've often dreamed of.

Your old master, Erfyr, had scratched a living as a smith in a poor farmhold, working himself sore day after day, fixing plowshares and shears. His was a life of frugal struggle, of hard winters and worry, and as his apprentice you walked the same path. You wondered why he remained in Cuanacht when he could have made a better living elsewhere. When asked, he'd talked of duty and responsibility. You never understood. Every day you worked that forge, you promised yourself you wouldn't become a poor old man like Erfyr. This much gold might have changed things for him.

At first you smile; you've avoided the pauper's fate. Then the wound in your side throbs to remind you of your own doom. You scoff at the cruel irony. With no way to appreciate it before you die, all this gold is little more than dead weight.

5

You drift away into a red haze. The pain becomes distant. You were here once, on the precipice of death, where the instinct to live and fight becomes distant, replaced with an overwhelming desire to drift off, to be still.

Back then, you fought ferociously, and won. For two days you crawled through a thick forest, before you returned to Cuanacht, with a gaping hole in your side. In the end, this only bought you another kind of death: a slower kind, as your wound deteriorated beyond help. You're not sure if you should come back from the edge of death once more. What if escaping will once again come at a price? Is it not better to drift away?

You're ready to give up, when strange blue light envelops you. Suddenly, you are ready to fight for your life again.

6

The monstrous corpse twitches on the ground while your thundering heart slows. You stare at it for some time, scarcely believing you killed something so terrifying. Have you really changed so much? Are you really any stronger than before? More courageous? Or do you now just possess the will to act?

Back when you were younger, a sun wyrm entered the lands around Cuanacht, killing people and ravaging crops. Fearful of the beast, the farmers banded together to drive it out. It was a massacre. Half the farmers died before the sun wyrm eventually retreated into the wilds, plunging six of Cuanacht's houses into mourning. You raged amidst the grief, demanding to know why they died. Why did the farmers have to face this creature when there were kings, knights and other heroes who were supposed to protect the simpler folk?

Glancing once more at the creature, you realize that you are now one of those heroes. Angry, bitter, and dying as you may be, you have the means to protect the simpler folk. The choice is now yours to make. Should you step up and become their protector, or do you become that which you cursed: an aloof, disinterested hero, content to leave the common folk to their fate?

7

There are precious few smiths who know the answer to the Riddle of the Oldsteel. This ancient metal was the favorite material of the previous masters of the island. It does not respond to heat. It's unbendable and impossible to shape with hammers or tongs. Yet, the Fore-dwellers used it to create many wonderful, intricate objects.

Your master knew the answer. Oldsteel becomes malleable only in response to a certain sound, and even then, shaping it requires Fore-dweller tools. Erfyr once had an ancient hammer with a bone handle that could do the trick, but he lost it playing cards. He could never replace it, nor forgive himself.

And now, a hammer like that is in your hands. If only you had time, you could learn the songs of the Fore-dwellers and use this tool to create many wonderful, awe-inspiring objects. If only you had time...

8

Shame burns in you, urging you to lash out. Even now that they've gone, you still can't think of the right words. You curse your twisted tongue and your slow mind as you find yourself gripping your hammer. This is you now. This is all you know. Perhaps that's why you dedicated yourself to the forge. Shaping metal is easier. You heat it up and hammer away until it becomes what you want. You can't do that with people. People are subtle and clever, and you've never been able to deal with them.

Years ago, when you were a boy, your father found a stolen brooch in your pack. It belonged to one of Cuanacht's wealthiest families and they were out for blood. You knew your eldest sister had taken it and hidden it there but in the face of your father's wrath, you froze, unable to form an explanation. Taking your paralyzed silence as an admission of guilt, his punishment came swift and fierce while your sister looked on.

It's never mattered whether you're in the right or the wrong, and after all you've been through, you still find yourself retreating to the forge every time dealing with other humans becomes too difficult.

9

Suddenly the anger that had boiled in you since you found the letter from Erfyr feels so misplaced. All this time, you'd cursed him for lying to you and leaving you behind on his quest for Kamelot and the grail. You could have helped. You were so sure.

Now the bloody fate of that quest has come to light, you're not so sure. Had he taken you with him, you'd be dead.

Your mind wanders to his forge in Cuanacht, its coals now lying cold and dull. There he became your friend and mentor. He'd taught you the skills and knowledge not just to shape metal but to live. Best of all, he'd believed in you when others didn't, knowing that if he failed, you would step up and try for yourself. With a slow nod, you feel you finally understand the old man, and find that you can forgive him. When next you can, you resolve to raise a mug of mead in his honor.

10

Stories of creatures similar to the one that wounded you are rife throughout the land. You kept listening to them wherever you went, and soon you found a common element. All sightings seem to have happened in lands surrounding the Hunter's Grove - not far from when you were attacked yourself.

Now, you stand in front of the dilapidated forge in the broken ruin that was once Cuanacht. You step in, trying to ignore memories of the long years spent here. You stoke the fire. You work the bellows. You take out the last discs and ingots of metal hidden in a cache under the floor. Then, you start your work.

You know the beast came for your heart, so you cover your torso with spikes. You know it was difficult to rip it off when it wrapped itself around you, so you add razor-sharp blades to your gauntlets to cut the tentacles off. Finally, you create a weapon: a trident with barbed blades that could help you keep the writhing creature at a distance.

Armed to the teeth, you leave for the Hunter's Grove alone and follow the clues until you finda dark ravine. A rotting body with its chest exploded from the inside is proof you came to the right place.

You step into the twilight, and soon notice movement. One. Two. Three. More and more orphaned hearts emerge from their burrows, their salivating maws pointed at you. You didn't expect that many. Prepared to go down fighting, you rush forward, only to discover they avoid combat. You pin one to the wall of the ravine. You rip another in half. Still, they try to evade you, instead of attacking. When sharp pain pierces your side - and your heart - you understand the reason. They know something is already growing within you. They know you're on your way to join them.

You shake off despair and make use of their reluctance, destroying their nest. Then, you discard the equipment tainted with their black blood and march back toward Cuanacht. This did not help you cure your condition, but you do feel better knowing nothing will fall prey to these creatures again.

As for you, when you die, it will be by your own hand, in the fires of a furnace hot enough to destroy the last of them. But this day is still in the future, and until then, you have to grasp every hour and every minute left for you in this world.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Ailei

1

You evade and strike in rapid, fluid motions, as fast as the wind itself, moving through your environment like you were born to it. There's no thought slowing you down, just instinct and action.

This, you learned collecting herbs at the edge of the wyrdness, where a moment's hesitation could prove deadly. Keen ears and swift feet were your greatest allies, for wyrdspawn lurked there.

Once, you let your attention wander. Only once. Stooping to collect a flower from a copse of ancient trees, you missed the approach of a silent wyrdbear, until its hot breath misted against your cheek. Tripping over a gnarled root saved you from its lunging claws. There was no time for terror, you just fled.

With the snarling creature on your heels, you ducked branches and leaped brambles,

dodging rabbit holes and springing off rocks. Every snapping bite and raking claw that missed you was exhilarating, flooding energy through your body, pushing you ever faster.

You felt invincible, untouchable. When you finally left the wyrdspawn behind, you rolled on the soft grass and laughed. You laughed until your sides hurt.

Now, you're not running, you're fighting, but the same rush of energy and exhilaration courses through you.

2

Shadows dance in the recesses of the menhir's skull. Towering above you, it leers down with empty eyes. Some find their monstrous appearance frightening or sinister, but not you. It comforts you like a soft embrace. Surrounded by three of these, each burning like beacons, the whole world seems brighter.

When was the last time you saw a sky so clear or felt a breeze so fresh? It whispers through your hair, bringing the sweet scent of meadows that you once wandered so frequently. You gaze to the horizon and, for once, feel that the wyrdness is no longer creeping towards you but retreating. What if this is how life could be? A life where everyone felt as safe and comforted as you do now. No more children would emerge from the wyrdness like you did, alone and scared and treated with suspicion. No more fearing the horrors spawned by those eldritch depths and spewed out onto your doorstep.

For a moment, you dare to hope.

3

You know these glares well, the suspicion that lies behind their eyes; watching for you to reveal your wyrdspawn curse or summon some horror to tear them apart. These are the same looks that the folk of Cuanacht gave you when you first emerged from the wyrdness and into their farmhold. Though shaking, and with tears streaming down your face, they greeted you not with kindness but from behind pitchforks and spears, for how could a child escape the wyrdness unscathed? And what happened to your parents? Those were the worst rumors. They conjured grisly tales of how you murdered your own mother and father or transformed them into nightmares.

"Witch", they called you. "Freak."

Some claimed that you caused the wyrdness, others that you bent it to your will, unleashing its horrors upon whoever you chose. Under the protection of Neante, however, they tolerated you. The whispers never stopped, but the people of the farmhold still came to you when they were sick.

Since that day, you've lived as a pariah, the rumors always one step ahead of you, prompting a frosty welcome in many settlements. Observing the sidelong glances, and people crossing the street when they see you, you wonder whether the stories have already beaten you here.

Or perhaps... they are just afraid. The wyrdness has caused so much hurt to so many. Despite their hostility, you feel for them. You understand their pain as you feel it more keenly than most.

4

You drop to your knees, panting while the rush of adrenaline eases. With pangs of fear still stabbing your gut, you glance to your vanquished enemy, now little more than a pile of rags and bones.

Something moves within, twitching the dirty cloth. The rags have formed a soft cradle ringed by bones like a grim nest. Within lies a baby. At first glance, it's human. Its fat little arms reach out as if grasping for its mother, and it begins to cry. The rags around it stir, forming a protective barrier between you and the baby.

It's not the rags that stay your hand. You don't recoil at the wyrdness-infused mutation running through its flesh. Instead, your heart aches with compassion, not despite the taint, but because of it. Had you been a little younger when the wyrdness devoured your home, this could easily have been you. Suddenly you understand how a creature like this came to be. You know well the longing this baby feels for its mother, a feeling so strong that it shapes the wyrdness around it to become its monstrous protector.

You've always felt strangely around creatures of the wyrdness, it's only now that you can identify that feeling as kinship. You want to take the baby with you but for a hundred reasons that would not work. Nor can you bring yourself to harm it. Its best chance is the wyrdness. Turning your back on the creature, you can only hope that a cloud of wyrdness hears its cries and comes to it, allowing it to reform.

5

Before you, the green wall of ancient trees undulates, as if breathing. As it exhales, it pushes wisps of mist from between the enormous trunks. As it inhales, you feel something pulling you into the green mass. This pull is hard to resist. Soon, you walk through the curtains of light, seeping from thick tree crowns above your head. There is wonder here, but not a nary of wyrdness to be found.

For so many years you felt like a naive fool, dreaming of the world free of this chaotic power. Everyone told you it is impossible, now that the Homelands are lost. They wanted you to stop daydreaming, to accept the world for what it is. But in this place, you can see a different reality is possible.

You feel vindicated, but as you walk deeper into the forest, you also realize you may find it hard to leave this place...

6

Sleep still eludes you. Sweating and tossing around your sheets, your mind refuses to shake the images of encroaching wyrdness. Clouds of it surround you, crawling ever closer, like a disease spreading until it overcomes the whole body. The nearest menhir suddenly feels very far away. Its distant light flickers like a lonely flame buffeted by wind, almost cowering from the wyrdness.

You can understand why it falters; a single candle trying to hold back the night. It's a helplessness that you've often seen in the dying. When they start losing the battle against wounds or disease, they all wear the same pale, haunted expression.

You've always strived to ease that suffering, guiding them away from their fear and towards acceptance. It never changed their end, but at least they faced it peacefully. As you wonder whether you can conquer your own fear and accept the wyrdness' inevitable victory, a spark of hope kindles in you. The menhir brightens, just as it had faltered when fear gripped you. The wyrdness recoils as though burned. As your hope grows, so does the light of the menhir, driving the wyrdness further back. You find yourself wondering what might happen if there were more of you, more silent protectors, holding candles against the darkness. Might the night turn into day?

7

With a satisfied nod, you clear away the last of your herbs. The prayer you spoke still resounds in your mind, sending your thoughts to Neante. It was the first chant she taught you after taking you in.

After that, she taught you dozens more, in that little place of hers in Cuanacht, where you became her daughter and apprentice. People came there for healing and guidance, and she taught you everything she knew. The prayers were dull, but you were captivated by her knowledge of herbalism and how it could calm a fever or cure countless other ailments. You always followed her lead until, one day, someone from the farmhold came to you with their sick child while Neante was away.

Without Neante's guidance, you panicked. You were too young. Too inexperienced. You didn't know all the prayers. The child's weak cough and her mother's pleading face tore at your heart. Without Neante, you were the best they had, and you had to act, not sit crying at the child's bedside.

You worked frantically: trying many combinations of prayers and herbs, learning from each failure. Eventually the fever broke, the color seeped back into the child's skin, and her breathing calmed. It was like something chased the evil from this girl. Though exhausted from days without sleep, a primal urge awoke in you. This was what your life was for.

Since that day, you studied harder, cured more people, and became a more accomplished healer than Neante ever was.

8

It's coming!

The reassuring light of a menhir seems but a distant dream, as the clouds of wyrdness flood in from all directions, warping everything in their path. In desperation, you try to bypass them, only to realize there's no way out. You are trapped, with your precious pocket of reality shrinking by the minute. As you realize this, suddenly your feet freeze in place, and you gasp for air. A long-forgotten memory awakens.

You were a toddler then. The memory is soft, out of focus, filled with emotions rather than images. A house at the edge of a forest. A loving family. The feeling of elation and triumph when your mother picked you up and carried you – not one of your many siblings – around the home, humming a comforting tune.

Then, one day, the tense voices of parents discussing something. Strange clouds behind the window, pushing from all directions. Your family gathering all their belongings in haste. A first step into the wyrdness. Then – awful, horrible things you'd rather not remember; the change that claimed everyone but you.

You were the only one to reach the farmhold. An unharmed, crying toddler, stumbling out of the deadly mists to the shock of everyone in Cuanacht. Two decades have passed, yet you still can't forget the faces of the people who leveled their pitchforks and spears at you.

9

After all the dangers and strange places you've seen in recent times, there's a comforting familiarity to the damp vellum. Its smell transports you back to Neante's small library where scores of scrolls lined the walls. There was probably more knowledge in that one room than in the rest of Cuanacht combined. Everything from dry and boring historical annals that Neante insisted you memorize, to more interesting treatise on medicine and anatomy, could be found there.

You can almost feel the old priestess' warmth and hear her raspy breath over your shoulder, so long did you spend studying in that candlelit haven. She'd be urging you towards some sacred sermon while you were fidgeting to get outside and wander the meadows instead. You were so impatient back then, even if you preferred to call it "practical".

Those moments would never come again. Only now that Neante has gone, you realize just how precious they were and what you'd give to read just one more sermon with her.

10

The menhir is so far away you barely feel it, and it fades with every second. Clouds of wyrdness are already flooding this land from all sides, like waters released by a burst dam. You wait for them patiently, sitting cross-legged in the middle of a small glade.

Not long ago, you would never have put yourself in such a position. You'd have run, as fast as your feet could carry you. But not today. It's been fifteen years since you came out of pure wyrdness naked, unharmed, the only survivor of your family. Since then, you've avoided it like a plague, even though it held all the keys to your many questions. How did you survive what others couldn't? Why did this power spare you? Are you somehow resistant? Are you a monster wrapped in human skin?

You're about to learn that. Calm and composed, you close your eyes, feeling the touch of wyrdness on your naked shoulders. It flows over you and into you, but your focus allows you to resist its influence, at least for now. You wait for something – anything – to happen.

After what feels like a very long time, you hear a familiar voice in front of you: warm, melodic. It's your mother, urging you to go toward the lights of the farmhold. You open your eyes and see two

figures just in front of you, although they do not seem to notice you. The first is your mother, pushing a small girl through the dense cloud, shielding her with her own body. Slowly, the legs and arms of your mother lose their shape and become limp, until she can move no more and begs you to go on alone.

Through tears that fill your eyes, you see a little girl – you – running towards the distant lights of Cuanacht that shine through the wyrdness like the eyes of some great beast. You see your mother, following the girl with her eyes, praying for all the gods to spare her from the wyrdness; a desire so strong it makes the clouds of chaotic substance slip around the girl like the waters of a highland stream around the body of a swimming trout. Eventually, the girl reaches safety unscathed, and your mother turns her gaze to you, as if she was urging you to go as well.

You stand up sobbing, tears streaming down your face, and run to safety, unable to explain what just happened.

As you head out of the wyrdness, one thing seems certain. This power is capable not only of warping and destroying things. It can also build scenes of striking beauty. Moments that tug right at the heart. It's like swimming in surging rapids: deadly to anyone who doesn't master them, but are the rapids themselves to blame? As you make your way toward the real world, you promise yourself one thing: you will never be afraid of wyrdness, because somewhere inside it, the memory of your parents lives on, just like the shadows and memories of everything else it has claimed.

Congratulations! Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action

Arev

1

You flow through strikes, stances and defenses, slipping into the zone you now so easily find as a warrior. Each movement lands with perfect balance and sets up your next move, as though rehearsed, despite the fact you act entirely on instinct.

You first felt like that at the Warrior's Fair, years ago. You knew you could fight, but when you entered that contest you discovered a state of mind that removed all distractions, sharpening your focus to a dagger's tip. In every duel, you bested your opponent, exploiting openings and crashing through defenses. When the contest was done, and the ale was flowing, the leader of a mercenary company approached you with congratulations on your outstanding performance, and a contract. You had to read it twice. The amount he offered for a year's service staggered you. As the son of a poor farmer, you'd never dreamed of such money.

There was only one answer you could give.

2

As you leave with your ill gotten gains, a pang of guilt shoots through you. After all the running, and the years that have passed, you haven't changed one bit. You're still the same unscrupulous bandit you tried to leave behind you.

Years ago, your warband was ordered to confiscate supplies from a small settlement. You remember one house in particular where you beat down the door and piled in with your raucous, blood thirsty comrades. Cowering at sword point in a corner, the family who lived there watched you ransack the place with fearful eyes and famished bodies. A floorboard creaked beneath your feet. Your keen eyes picked out scratches on its edges where it had been raised and lowered.

The color drained from the family's faces as they realized you'd found their hiding place. You wrenched the board up and uncovered a cache of food, rousing a cheer from your company. The family pleaded with you, but you were deaf to their plight.

It wasn't until your blood cooled after the raid that you appreciated what fate had in store for the family. Their desperation burned into your memory that day and has followed you ever since. And now, when you took what wasn't yours, that feeling returned: an unwelcome guest here to haunt you.

3

You hesitate, scarcely believing that you have the grail before you. Relics and treasures have passed through your hands before, but this one is special. A thousand legends and stories surround this simple cup, of magical abilities which can cleanse disease and dispel evil hexes. You can't help wondering what it might do for you.

As your fingers grasp its surface, warmth spreads through them. Your aches and pains ease, and a trickle of energy restores you, but the dark cloud you've carried all these years shows no sign of lifting. You're not that disappointed. After all, what did you expect? That touching a cup would make up for the years of cruelty, theft and torment you caused as a brigand?

Absolution isn't easy. Not with the scale of your crimes. It will take more than a single relic to stop the desperate faces haunting your dreams and to lift the regret you feel when you reflect before a campfire.

4

Heavy as the gold in your purse weighs, it doesn't feel enough. It never has. Over the years, the amount of wealth that has passed through your hands is as terrifying as what you did to gain it.

You remember stumbling out of a temple, choking on the smoke of the fires you lit inside. Your hands were blackened with soot and the gold filling your arms was splattered with the blood of the innocents whose hands you severed to take it.

Could the sacking of a temple and the slaughter of its priests have been the cause of your curse? As quickly as this question enters your mind, a dozen similar atrocities you performed clamor for your attention, each worthy of the honor. Narrowing your curse down to a single incident seems impossible. Perhaps it wasn't a single act but a culmination of all cruelties? But if so, why did no other mercenary suffer the same fate?

5

With the sun in the sky and a fresh breeze against your skin, you take pleasure in your foraging and it's not long before you've collected a hearty supply. You make the most of it, knowing all too well that good weather like this doesn't always mean bountiful food. At least, not for you.

When you decided to settle in Cuanacht, the farm you bought looked so promising with good soil and abundant water, yet the crops failed year after year. Digging into your savings, you bought a second plot of land, one that had previously yielded good growth. You worked as hard as the other farmers, using the same techniques, yet your fortunes failed to improve. Even during years of perfect weather conditions, when the neighboring farms boasted rich harvests, your pitiful crops stood wilted and dry. Your savings dwindled just like your crops, and when the rest of Cuanacht looked forward to a great harvest, you and your family faced only hunger and despair.

6

That wasn't even a warmup. There's no thrill of combat, of fighting for your life. You don't bask in how your skills have grown. Instead, you're reminded of times when you killed simpletons who barely knew how to hold a spear.

As a mercenary, you lived for violence. You trained against experienced, cruel opponents, and when you raided settlements, you fought as a unit with a plan, and always with the element of surprise. You also picked your targets: weak, minor settlements with little more than an ill trained and unprepared militia to oppose you.

It was always a slaughter. In all your time as a mercenary and a brigand, you rarely faced a skilled, prepared opponent. Despite the fact that something in you longed for a fair, challenging fight, you intentionally avoided them.

Fear and confusion glistened in the eyes of those desperate men and women you fought, as they realized they could not match your skill. You still feel every pair of those eyes on you in the depths of night. You see their faces and hear the frightened quaver in their voices. "Why?" they ask as your blade plunges into them. "Why?" they plead again as their blood seeps into the ground.

7

Endless fields of crops stir in the breeze on either side of you, rippling like waves in a green sea. Tools creak lazily, hanging from the barns and farmhouses leading into Halfway. It's so peaceful here. You always liked that about your farm. Barren though it turned out to be, it was also serene. There was an honesty to working the earth, growing instead of killing.

And there was an honesty to the life you tried to build there with your wife and child on the outskirts of Cuanacht. For a while you believed it could change you. Some days in those fields, with a plow in your hand instead of a sword, you felt that you'd finally left the past behind.

But your curse caught up with you as ever it does. One failed harvest too many and your wife left, taking your child with her leaving you to your hunger and mounting debt.

You try to shake away the misery of how that life turned out and focus on the bright moments that shine like gemstones in your dark past.

8

You can never truly leave the mercenary life behind, for it plows a furrow of devastation so wide that it's not just your guilt that you have to face. Killing a man doesn't end with their death; it shatters the lives of wives, children, brothers and cousins around them. When you raid a settlement's food stores, the whole settlement goes hungry. And your manner of leaving your warband earned you yet another, particularly violent, set of enemies.

You can't begin to imagine how many people have a good reason to hate you.

Even now, years after deserting the ranks, the same stress and tension grips you whenever you enter a settlement. Though you grew out your beard and changed your appearance, you're constantly afraid it won't be enough. What if someone still sees your face in their nightmares? Wouldn't they recognize you even now? And if someone does recognize you, be it an old comrade or a victim, they will demand their due in blood.

Today, luck is on your side. No one seems to take note of you. But what about tomorrow? And the day after that?

9

Aches rack your legs from your waist to the tips of your toes. It's been some time since you were this tired from walking, and the memory is not pleasant.

Your warband had been in the employ of some border lord as he prosecuted a pointless war against his peers. He paid well but the work grew ever more distasteful. His orders seemed more motivated by spite than having any semblance of strategy behind them. One night, your warband gathered as your leader marked the next target: another innocent village to pillage and burn. No military value, no strategic importance, just men, women and children who happened to be living on the wrong side of a line on a map.

You couldn't face another bloodbath, so you spoke out against your leader, openly opposing him in front of his warband. His response was swift and fierce. His closest lieutenants seized you, pinning your arms to your sides while he beat you. You were sentenced to be flayed before the warband, in the ruins of the village you sought to protect; a warning to anyone else who dared challenge their leader's authority.

Hours before the raid, your bonds were cut. One of your comrades, your closest friend in the warband, pressed a blade into your hand and told you to run.

And run you did. For days they hounded you, these people you once fought alongside, until you lost them in the wilds. Then you were free. Free for a life of looking over your shoulder.

10

The day is coming to an end, a tired orange sun slumping beyond the titanic wyrdstone wall that casts a long shadow over you and your encampment. Shivering from the evening chill, you reach to add one more log to the campfire, but your hand freezes. Something glistens in the forest in front of you, catching the last light of the day.

Armed and careful, you draw closer, afraid someone might be watching your camp, preparing a night ambush. But what lies between the trees is not a beast or a man, but a small wooden shrine, its walls charred, its roof – covered in copper sheets - reflecting the sunset.

You remember this place! You were here almost a decade ago, with your companions, robbing the three priestesses of an idol of some strange, four faced god with gemstones in his eyes. You plucked those eyes yourself, and you're almost certain the shrine darkened for a moment as you did that.

A lone, grey-haired crone emerges from the shrine and quickly confirms your suspicion, welcoming you back with a wry smile.

You fall to your knees and beg her to lift the curse, or to tell you what powerful, dark deity you have enraged.

She laughs, and replies with a strange accent:

"Stand up, young fool. Svarog is a lost god, who remained in distant lands far from Avalon. I am the last to remember him, and I assure you, he has no power here. And even if he did. I wouldn't lift your curse, for there's no other curse than the one you carry in your thoughts. You see, there are many people who struggle and fail. There are many people with a spot of bad luck, for whom fate only has pain and sorrow in store. Because of your guilt, you attribute all of this to a punishment for your past deeds, but that doesn't make the curse any more real..."

At first, you want to lash out angrily. She must be wrong! There must be a source of everything that happened to you! You will find it one day! Still, you nod your head, share your rations with the priestess and say farewell. Only as you come back to the camp, you realize that perhaps it is better this way. Perhaps by seeking for the one act that doomed you, you ignored all the other acts? If she is right, one day the chain of bad events that follow you will naturally end, and your luck may return. You will be waiting for this moment patiently, like for crops sprouting in the spring.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Echoes of the End

Mabd

1

As you traveled, you often wondered about stories from the past describing summer fields, autumn light, spring flowers ... all abstract concepts. You tried to imagine a warm sun while drawing your face close to the scorching heat of a campfire, and you didn't know if you'd enjoy it as much as the ancient storytellers did.

One day, you trudged knee-deep through a snowdrift, following your master, Tadg. It was a fourth day of your return journey from a cozy home near the Still River, inhabited by a family of land hunters.

Passing Twisted Pathways took you three days – a horrible experience. Fleeing monsters, hunting strange animals, searching for worn-down marks left by generations of wandering storytellers. But you made it through, and that's all that matters. It was your first time traveling so far from Mangrove Huddle and you learned how crucial your work was for Avalon's scattered communities. The family you met was oblivious to everything happening in recent months. They didn't know one of their relatives recently died, they didn't know about the depleting hunting grounds in the south, on the other hand, they had new information about the black beast drifting over Avalon who was recently more active

You, storytellers, are messengers linking this cold, shattered world together

Tadg's voice abruptly interrupted your thoughts. "We're approaching the Menhir Meadow. Be careful. If we trust hunters' words, the Black Drifter prowls this place. When we get back home, you'll start your combat training. The trails are getting more dangerous. And, when I feel you're ready, we will travel to Colony. Or maybe I'll show you the Haunted Town? It's a wonderful place to gather stories – and also a perfect place to test your combat abilities."

2

Once you considered the cold and wild beasts the greatest perils of traveling. That was before your first trip outside Mangrove Huddle, a short journey to Menhir's Meadow, became a nightmarish struggle that lasted for several days.

Your teacher chose a perfect day to travel – the sky was clear, and wyrdness was scarce. Unfortunately, just like in any good story, something had to go wrong. When you were halfway there wyrdness rose from the ground, swirling around you frantically. You lost your way, your mind, and almost your life.

Tadg found you after several days of searching – wounded and incoherently mumbling. You attacked him, thinking he was a Fetch trying to deceive you. In the end, you survived and, since then, have always been prepared for the worst whenever you set foot on a trail.

3

Sanctuaries – the few places that seem to repel wyrdness. They were always crucial for wandering travelers, offering respite on journeys through dangerous lands. Around them, settlements rose hundreds of years ago. You didn't fully grasp their importance until you made your first journey. The pain of wyrdness pressing on your mind, the surreal visions it brought, the itching and burning of skin – they all etched themselves in your memory, just like the enormous relief brought by the return to the sanctuary of Mangrove Huddle.

The journey took place when the tides of wyrdness were low – anyone brave enough could wander far from settlements, hunt for food, or simply take a stroll. But there were also times when wyrdness was denser, and only the most experienced travelers could traverse it. That's when sanctuaries become the lifeline of struggling humanity.

4

When your apprentice saw your carnyx for the first time, and you told her it was an instrument, she laughed, because she took it for an extravagant staff or some ancient symbol of power. You played it, and she laughed again. "What an unexpected noise!" she exclaimed. "It's like a boar trying to speak in a little girl's voice!"

You joined her laughter, and, from then on, you always remembered these words when you held the carnyx in your hands.

Only with time did your ward appreciate the harsh nature of carynx's sound that was a good match for many grim, unsettling legends of the past.

5

Sharp pain flared in your hip after an outlaw slashed you with a curved blade. You and your teacher refused to hand him your belongings, and you recklessly reached for a knife. A fight broke out – Tadg danced around, sword in one hand, small buckler in the other. You wanted to join him in his uneven battle against three brigands, but had no idea a single cut could be so painful.

Soon, Tadg managed to wound one of the opponents, and all three backed off. "As you see, scoundrels," your teacher said, panting, "you could probably kill and rob us, but at least one of you will pay with your life. Do you find it an equitable trade?"

He straightened up, visibly tired. "On the other hand, if you let us go, we could help you – you're outlaws, not wanted anywhere. We could change that. We're wandering storytellers. We could take you to Mangrove Huddle, and say you rescued us from Snow Antlion's pit. You'd be welcomed to start new lives."

His words were sweet, full of promise – what was most important, they seemed true. Outlaws discussed them quietly. Just like that, things went from a heated fight to a quiet discussion. The power of words amazed you. You promised yourself you'll spend more time learning rhetoric and eristic, as Tadg words achieved what his sword and your puny knife could not – the brigands holstered their weapons.

6

You smile as a memory comes to your mind.

You were a young girl who admired anyone who knew a craft. A butcher – a much needed person who knew how to prepare meat, and which parts of the wyrd-twisted creatures were safe to eat. A healer – a miracle worker who could save someone's life. And Tadg, your teacher – a scholar, singer, storyteller, and wanderer. You could listen to him for hours, soaking up his knowledge, wondering how he could be so wise and skillful. You thought you would never be like him.

Now, you think you could converse with him at the same level. Maybe you would possibly defeat him in a discourse? You push memories away, as you have more important things to do than pondering. However, you can't help but smile for the rest of the day.

7

"When menhirs still protected Avalon..." Many stories begin this way. You especially like one of them.

It's a tale from around four hundred years ago. The number of protagonists varies from one to four – it has many variations, but the story is the same. They woke up one day, read letters from their mentors, and began a journey that changed them from smallfolk to brave heroes who fought Fore-dwellers. They met Arthur, and rediscovered a way to relight menhirs.

For most of your life, you've tried to live like them - travel, solve people's problems, experience everything the world has to offer. But it wasn't exactly possible, as there were so many places cut off from the world by walls of thick wyrdness. You wonder how many secrets you have missed, how many tales were left untold.

Now, you light your first menhir, just like the heroes from your favorite legend. Your dream came true, opening a way to all those uncharted places lost to cold and wyrdness...

8

After another fascinating find, you remember your mentor's words: "Mabd, dear, stories and tales are everywhere. If you realize that, they will find you eventually." He was right, just like on the Mangrove Huddle's market.

You were bored. And, as always in similar cases, Tadg told you to bring him a new story. You reluctantly went between the stands and, without any hope, started looking for anything of interest. All you found at first was a girl who tried to steal a chunk of dried meat – nothing special at all, only a depressive parable of your dying world. But then, you met a slender, young man with a huge sword in hand, white-knuckled. He looked lost, as if he didn't know how to speak with people. You wanted to help him, but to tell an exceptional story, better to remain an observer

The man paid an absurd amount of money for a dried turnip and a piece of flatbread and, oblivious to his poor pecuniary decision, moved on. You asked around about him, and found out a story of the last son of a noble family who lost his manor to wyrdness and fled to Mangrove Huddle to find a new place to live.

9

"Luck is an essential power that molds traveler life. If you're lucky, you'll find lodging, a warm fire, and a story to learn. Bad luck can kill you in the blink of an eye." Tadg's words resonated in your head as you looked at his body crushed under a fallen tree. It wasn't his fault. It wasn't yours. It was the wind that swayed a tree, and heavy ice on its crown that overbalanced it – that's it, a rotten break.

At first, you were overwhelmed with despair and grief, and you wandered aimlessly between small settlements, telling sad stories, being afraid of dying on the trail. But then, you fully understood your teacher's words. You had to let your fear go because otherwise you would always be paralyzed. You didn't have to think about death, as you didn't have any control over it. From then on, you always set out on journeys with a light heart.

10

Tentatively you open a chest with your teacher's, Tadg's, belongings – aged dust rises in the air, glimmering in the rays of sunlight, making you cough. You move aside wooden pendants and unfinished instruments and find a journal bound in weathered leather. Your heart flutters the same way it did when you fell in love the first time – you open the book containing memories of the man who taught you everything you know.

You briefly comb through his memories from his young days – he started as a ruffian, then quit this dishonorable profession and became a guide. Later on, he was noticed by a group of wandering storytellers who recruited him to their small group and trained him in their craft – telling legends, playing music, surviving between safe settlements, finding sanctuaries, and more.

At one point, Tadg met someone – a fair woman, with black eyes, and golden hair shining in the moonlight. The description of their romance is poetic and detailed, but you are only interested in one note – they had a child. And the child's name was Mabd...

You follow this topic through the journal and find out that Tadg had done the same thing to you that you did to your daughter - he wanted you to become the best storyteller that ever existed, and to do this, he had to cut his blood ties between you and him. He wanted to tell you about this when you would consider yourself a true wandering storyteller.

You don't feel anger or grudge – you are thankful for his decision. Because of his self sacrifice - living with a daughter and depriving himself of a child's love, you could become who you are today. These feelings are also proof that you also have made a good decision to instruct your daughter in the same way.

You visit your father's grave at the outskirts of Mangrove Huddle to bow your head before him one last time. Then, you move on.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Sloan

1

You look at the pathetic equipment you lug through these doomed lands. It's useful, you can't deny, but when you think about your family treasures and armory, these items appear little better than trash.

You still remember the first time you entered the locked room, where your father stored sharp longswords, fine armor, ropes and climbing equipment from his life of adventuring, and more. Among them were less useful prizes from his journeys – intriguing trinkets, monstrous skulls, or half-decayed parchments – all of it now lost in wyrdness.

You lived in Haunted Town, on the cliff in the shade of ruined Kamelot – alone with your father and a fistful of other stubborn fools who refused to leave this damned place. You were a boy fed glorious stories about your family, thinking only about protecting your ancestral home – dangers of living in a wyrdness-covered, dilapidated settlement didn't concern you. Yet they should.

One day you went with your father to hunt near the castle – you remember this was the first time you killed a fox, and its carcass hung uncomfortably from your belt – and when you returned, your home was gone. Wyrdness took it somewhere far away, crushed it, or destroyed it - you never found out. Your father didn't say a thing. He grabbed your arm and took you to the cliff. Then, you made a quiet journey down on an ancient machine, and through white desserts toward your new home - Mangrove Huddle.

2

Yet again, you proved your worth. But you had to fight for it, finding a way out from a convoluted social situation. Why must you always do this? In your father's stories, it wasn't always like that.

In past times, your family was respected – people listened to what your ancestors said, they followed your guidelines. They knew they were inferior, and the only way to prosper was to obey. It was simple, effective. The house of Rotch had dozens, hundreds maybe, under their protection, and there wasn't a single event in the whole history when the people starved or experienced disaster beyond the frigid winter.

But now? No one remembers those times. Everyone thinks you an ordinary man, but you're not! And you'll remind them about this every single time.

3

You remember lying on a bear pelt before the hearthstone and listening to your father's tales about heroes – not the pompous knights of the Round Table, but nobles who cared about people under their protection. Heroes who were your ancestors.

The story you liked the most was about the one called Thebalt, who came to Avalon along with King Arthur. He fought with Fore-dwellers, even though he struggled against the Red Death that flowed through his veins, and even though people shunned him for his sickness. You always wanted to one day possess the same dedication.

Another hero who you adored was Otsin, more scholar than warrior. He lived around three hundred years ago and cared for menhirs in the face of the impending winter. Only because of him, you dedicated some of your time to studies.

Now, you have earned the privilege to be immortalized in legends too.

4

You think of all the coins and trinkets you hauled to the merchant – worthless, heavy rubbish. In your manor there were chests filled with gold, silver, and jewels. You can still remember the joy you felt when you discovered them and played with the glittering treasures. And you recall your disenchantment when you learned they were close to being worthless.

In these times, people value frozen meat, tools, or hard work much more than a piece of metal. And it's hard to blame anybody for this – weather is harsh, and a blazing fire gives much more hope and bliss than any amount of shiny bauble. You have accepted this reality long ago, but it is still disappointing that all the wealth painstakingly gathered by your ancestors in the end amounted to nothing.

5

When your father died of fever, you had to face your greatest fear and provide for yourself alone in the world. You had to learn to manage your money, haggle with merchants, work to survive. You could do one thing at a time, but all of them they intimidated you. Your first lone expedition to the market ended up poorly you went to the same baker as always to buy a loaf of bread. Instead, he offered you a small piece of flatbread and some tasteless vegetables. When he told you the price, you paid without thinking, still agitated after your father's death, and you tried to count if those provisions would suffice for a day

Later you found out that you could have bought a week's supply for that amount of money. It was a harsh lesson, as you had to work for two in the upcoming months.

6

Towers reach to the sky. Walls stand so tall that no giant could ever crush them. The statue of King Arthur watches over travelers knocking at the majestic gate of his castle, Kamelot. You didn't visit this fortress when you were a child your father despised it and always said it was the main source of Avalon's ills. But you had dreamed about visiting one day.

And now, you're here. The pristine walls from your imagination are, in reality, crumbling rocks that wouldn't defend against a kid with a rope. Most of the towers have collapsed, their spires drowned in the sea instead of the sky. And the magnificent, awe-inspiring statue of Arthur is in deplorable state.

But you don't feel despair or disappointment. You feel empowered, ready to fight for what's lost and forgotten. Maybe, someday, you will bring glory to this place?

7

The wicked knight is dead, its armor dented, its helm shattered. You wonder what power decided to turn a symbol of virtue into this walking horror. For once, you're thankful your father was so strict about your combat training.

You loved swordplay, but you hated all the other physical activities related to it. For one day you spent with a weapon in your hand, you had to spend three days running, exercising, and climbing in bulky training armor. It not only seemed a waste of time and energy, but it was also unpleasant and boring. Still, you buckled down, as you saw progress in your swordplay. And, of course, you believed your father when he told you that all of this would come in handy someday.

You look at the still monster again. It was tireless and relentless. Would you be able to keep up with it long enough, if not for the months and years spent building up your stamina? You thank your long-gone father for being such a strict teacher.

8

Once, you went to the butcher to bring your landlady some meat chops. You were granting her many favors to pay for her hospitality, and because your father had taught you to help others even if they weren't your subjects.

This time the butcher was closed, and the owner was near his shop, talking to a beaten-up kid - you remembered him. He was a child of a pair of drunkards, a pathetic couple. The butcher gave the boy a warm cup of milk and invited him inside to warm by the fire.

Several weeks later, you discovered that the boy was taken in by the butcher and became his apprentice. And he became a great man caring for his people. Even though he was an orphan from an awful family, he was brave, and kind. He eventually grew into a fat, short-tempered man who never thought twice about helping others.

This always made you think: if a low-born orphan can grow up to become a paragon of hope, what is the meaning of ancient lineages, noble titles, and vows?

9

This is too much for you. Wyrdness encroaches on your mind. The shame of being forced to flee from a battle. All the tragedies happening around you... You feel your ailment returning a deep sadness drowning out every other voice and feeling in your head, overwhelming your senses, pushing you into catatonia. You know you shouldn't let it take control, but you can't stop it.

You crawl into a ball of misery, clinging onto your sword — the only thing that anchors you to your past.

Father – died of the fever.

Grandmother lost in wyrdness.

Friend killed by an outlaw.

More faces, more sorrowful ends. Died of gangrene. Committed suicide. Starved. Madness took her. Devoured alive. Changed into a warped one. Died while giving birth to a wyrdchild. Dead, deceased, killed, lifeless, cold...

Why can't you join them? Why do you have to continue your struggle, while others are already resting?

10

Mangrove Huddle — you have many bad memories of this place. But there are also some pleasant ones. You are here for one of them.

You've lived under Tenille's roof since you came to Mangrove Huddle with your father. Tenille runs a tavern that was also an inn once, but since there are no travelers, accommodation is not needed anymore. When you first came to the huddle, she gave up one room for you, so that you didn't have to live on the frigid streets. It's time to repay the debt.

You enter the well known tavern, seeing all those familiar patrons faces and smelling the cheap beer. Tenille spots you immediately she's vigilant, as always, a cautious cat on the prowl for some coin. And that's why she loses her interest in you. You ignore this humorous offense and greet her warmly. "What do you want?" she asks with a scratchy voice. "Do you want to live here again for free, you old parasite? You don't look good," she says inspecting you head to toe. "Sit, eat something. If you look this old, how old must I be?"

You smile and let her prepare a meal for you. You eat in silence enjoying the taste and warmness, so different from cold, tough provisions you ate on your journeys. You thank for the meal and hospitality, and you give the woman a bag full of gold. "For everything you did for me," you say. Tenille looks at you, surprised, tears forming in her eyes. "You won't come back, will you?" She comes out from behind the counter and hugs you tightly. "Be safe, son," she whispers.

You leave the tavern with a light heart, knowing that you are free from your past, and now you can look forward.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on you can use it as your second Character Action.

Dagan

1

You look upon your new hook, and pleasant memories manifest.

You were an apprentice barely a week when your master made you responsible for preparing an entire boar for the festival of the Allfather's Blessings. You carefully cut the tainted flesh and tumors caused by wyrdness, and ensured the bile and bowels don't taint anything. You roasted the meat until it was soft and juicy. Your master praised you and gifted you a small steel hook for drying meat.

Later, there were many other gifts and signs of gratitude, not only from your master, but from the entire settlement; but that small hook always remained special to you. You smile, hanging your new, shiny weapon beside it.

2

Such an abundance of food! It could last two weeks or more, if you didn't have to fight, run, or wander through frozen wastes.

Come to think of it, you rarely went hungry. Even in the direst of times, you somehow managed to feed your folks in Mangrove Huddle. The butcher's shop you inherited was small, and even after the luckiest hunt, trappers only brought you only enough meat to fill some of its shelves. But you always managed to scrape by. Sometimes you prepared bonemeal to sustain the settlement; often you made do with skin and scraps you'd normally throw away, making cheap, yet filling sausages. Sometimes you had to hide some of your wares from the rich people, so you could pass them to beggars or children. It wasn't particularly lucrative, but you were at least pleased no one died of hunger in your town.

You wonder if your skills would still be needed when you manage to fulfill your goal and find a reliable source of food for the Huddle.

3

Over the years, your suppliers brought you increasingly strange meat. At first, you worried little. Then, you started noticing – unnatural things. Strange, black strands in muscle fibers. Eyes inside a boar's loin. Balls of fur and teeth in an elk's haunch....

Initially, you tossed such meat away, but then hunters started bringing fewer supplies, as the weather worsened. You had to reconsider your approach. You couldn't sell this tainted food, as you would feel guilty – hence it became your meals, leaving the other, more safe cuts for the people of your town.

This decision wasn't easy to make – you were aware of the dangers, but you'd rather risk your own health than someone else's. And now, you're sick, fat, and always angry. If only people knew what you had done for them.

Unless, of course, it's not the result of your peculiar diet...

4

Your wounds don't close, but cold dulls the pain. It's not a good thing, though. In this state, you can easily forget the danger of these injuries.

When you were a kid, you often found yourself kicked out. Your drunk parents didn't want you around, and as a result you often got sick or went hungry for several days. Of course, you also had to face the cold. One time, when your parents didn't let you in for the night, you were so cold that, during a tussle with another street urchin, you broke your arm and didn't feel a thing. You suffered for many weeks, lying in bed with a severe fever and, for once, caring parents, sobered by guilt.

You decided to learn how to fight the cold after this event. You visited healers, but their recipes were too complicated for you. You visited farmers, but their methods weren't effective. Hunters didn't want to give their secrets away. But one innkeeper taught you how to make a particularly warming stew to help cope with the frigid weather. Since then, you've only improved her recipe.

5

It's the first time you have tasted fiery brew – it's based on strong mead, and you always avoided liquor, as it led your parents to a pathetic end.

It's hard for you to admit, but you like the taste. And the effects. The mead rouses your blood, allowing herbal remedies in the brew to flow through your veins, warming you from the inside and healing damage caused by cold. As a side effect, your head becomes dizzy, but it's a rather pleasant feeling. You realize it can also be disastrous, as you can forget about the dangers of cold and pain. To take your mind off this feeling, you try to remember your parents.

What a woeful couple they were. You hated them as a child, but now you just feel sorry for them. Your first memory is of your father hitting your hand as you tried to reach for a piece of roast horn on a table. Many of your childhood memories resemble this. You were always hungry, as they didn't care about buying food. You were cold, as they used to kick you out on the streets to forget themselves in mead. You were in pain, as they beat you whenever they thought you stole their beverages. And, in the end, they died. You didn't attend their funeral. You didn't cry. You felt free for the first time.

6

Your parents were in debt, and, when they died, their house was taken by lenders. You were accustomed to living under the stars, but this time it wasn't a temporary affair.

You tried to find work, but the reputation of your parents closed most doors for you. Caretakers and Allfather priests drove you out from under the warm tree's mots. You thought you would die. You didn't. A butcher, one of the most reputable people in Mangrove Huddle, took you in. He said he didn't see any evil inside you, and you should have a chance to become a good man. He taught you his craft, he gave you home – a real home with warmth and trust – and he was a father to you. When he died, you inherited his shop and continued to support the people of Mangrove Huddle.

7

Year after year, your health grew worse. You blamed the meat touched by wyrdness that you wouldn't dare to sell to others, so you ate it yourself. However, your past could also be the cause of your condition – as a kid, you were mostly malnourished, cold and unloved.

Work started to tire you. You needed to rest after chopping bones and bigger cuts of meat, and you panted when you spent too long near the smokehouse. There was an unpleasant heaviness in your legs when you spent too much time standing, talking with hunters and customers. Living like this was becoming unbearable, and you had a feeling that it could kill you at some point.

What was worse, everyone in the settlement seemed to dwindle as well. Wyrdness got thicker, and the tree wasn't as effective in repelling cold as before – hence hunters couldn't travel as far, and the farmers had problems cultivating their meager plants. You looked hunger in the face.

And now, you, the overweight, tired man, hold the responsibility for your village's future.

8

Pain lances through your chest. Your tired legs can't carry your heavy body anymore. You sweat like a boar – the sweat freezes immediately, burning your exposed skin. You're exhausted – you want to sleep. But you know that the moment you close your eyes, you won't open them ever again – so you focus on the pain to stay conscious.

You wonder if you resemble your father when he was dying. He was hefty, his skin greasy. When he breathed, you could hear the whistling a dozen feet away. He smelled like manure as he shouted for his precious mead, exposing rotten teeth. Even the memory disgusts you. You fear your death will be equally ugly.

But it won't! Even if you die now, it won't be like this. You're doing something right. You're a better person than him, surely.

9

"Treat animals with respect, Dagan. Not only do they help us survive, but they are living beings themselves. Just like us humans," the butcher said to you once while teaching you how to remove a liver without spoiling meat with bile. "You know stories about the children of Morrigan? They hunt humans like we hunt animals. The difference is, they humiliate their prey, they mutilate corpses out of spite, and they don't spare even children. They treat their

victims without respect. And if you show cruelty to even the smallest animal, you will be just like them. A monster. Remember that."

You wondered why — of all people — it was the butcher who taught you respect for all living things, but you tried to live according to his words. It was the right way. You feel no shame for the blood on your hands: not because of indifference, but because you knew the animals died to let your village live, and that they received the respect they deserved. Unfortunately, other people couldn't understand that, and they tried to rush your work or complained about your methods. This made you angry. You didn't have any empathy left for them.

10

You stand before the monumental, black stone surrounded by ice pillars — everything is covered in intricate symbols, crude runes, and pictograms. Legends say this place contains all of Avalon's history, and that if you write something here, it becomes a law. You came here to do something that couldn't be done in any other way.

You look for a blank space to fit your declaration — it's not an easy task, as it took you several hours to find a free spot, almost at the top of the monument. Then, panting from the climb and fighting vertigo, you start engraving: "I, Dagan of Mangrove Huddle, disown my parents, whose names aren't worthy of writing. I recognize Gaichobhar, the butcher from Mangrove Huddle, who died eleven winters ago, as my rightful father. He was a good man, and his name shall be remembered."

You crawl down from the stone — your mind is calm, your heart steady. You bow before all the memories gathered here and move on. It's time to finish what you started.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Fyul

1

You don't remember where or when you found your first knife, but you remember that the same day it was bloodied by your dinner — a small snow fox. Since then, the small blade became your close friend — it kept you safe and fed.

You trained hard to learn how to throw a knife — after a few weeks, you decided you were pretty good at it, and tried to test your abilities during a hunt. You noticed a fat hare, you took aim, you threw — and hit. But then, the animal bolted along with your weapon. You didn't catch it, and you didn't find your knife. And you learned to never part with your only weapon.

It wasn't that you abandoned the idea of throwing weapons — it was a fantastic way to surprise an enemy or gain some reach. But you made sure always to have a spare knife tucked behind your belt.

2

Another beast of wyrdness perished under your blade. Most of them are frightening, dangerous, vicious — yet predictable. But there are other monsters lurking in the wilderness, and the very thought of them makes you shiver. Pilgrims.

You've encountered them twice, but the second time you escaped at first sight. However, your initial meeting will live in your memory forever. You were a fledgling wyrdhuntress then, and, of course, you were full of yourself. It was a harsh evening — a whiteout obscured the view, the frigid wind crawled under your clothes, and small crystals of ice scratched your face. At one point, you began to feel somebody is calling you, but you didn't hear anything — you simply felt it. You readied your weapons and waited. Finally, a lanky, tall figure emerged from the blizzard.

You couldn't even defend from a single strike — all of them lashed your mind, not body. When your torment stopped, you were lying in the snow, stained with blood from self-inflicted wounds. A tall, faceless figure stood over you, extending its hand — you didn't know if it wanted to help you stand or point out your weaknesses. You lost your consciousness. When you woke, it was the next day already, you were freezing to death, and you wanted to forget everything. You couldn't. The meeting with a Pilgrim still taints your memory.

3

You were a young, emaciated girl when you arrived in Mangrove Huddle — you followed some wandering storytellers here, trying to escape the guards of the Colony, who decided you stole food one time too many.

In Mangrove Huddle, you wanted to start stealing again, but when a local butcher saw you, he took you to a tavern and bought you a stew and accommodation for the night. You talked — you found out that he had a problem: a beast was killing the hunters in snow deserts outside of town.

You found and dispatched this beast the next day to pay the butcher for his hospitality. This was the first step in your new career: killing wyrdspawn for a fee. After a while, you received formal training, and found yourself some companions. The news about a group of young wyrdhunters who freed many communities from monsters spread through the island.

For a time, all of you felt invincible. This didn't last.

4

You looked at the palm of your hand — a piece of bloodied antler protruding from your flesh. You didn't feel pain, as wyrdness still rushed through your veins. You grabbed the bone, pulled it out with an unpleasant sound, and threw it at the charging elk — you knew it wouldn't hurt it, but it was a distraction. When it hit, the beast closed its eyes for a moment, and you hid behind a tree.

Warped elk. You didn't meet any of these creatures until this day. You had heard about a horse-like monster with a naked skull — it could be a horse- or elk-walker. But you hadn't fully grasped how dangerous they could be until you met one, with its deadly antlers that crumbled inside the wounds.

You jumped out from the other side of the trunk, preparing your knives — you didn't intend to use them, until you got your spear back, you wanted to avoid close combat. You were unlucky — the monster was right in front of you, opening a mouth full of fangs.

As you dodged, many scenarios flashed in your mind, each but one of them without a good outcome. You whistled, and your sparrowhawk dove toward the beast – it bought you just enough time to grab your spear and prepare for another charge. Force of the impact dislocated your shoulder, but the warped elk took it last, fetid breath, slowly sliding from your weapon.

5

Wyrdness has never been a real problem for you. In legends, it was always a destructive power, warping flesh and mind, making humans into monsters. These legends live on and make people avoid travels. And it's not a bad thing – there are more dangerous threats out on the trails.

One of them got to you a moment ago – cold. You never know when to expect a blow of wet, frigid wind or a sudden drop of tem perature. And when you realize you're in trouble, there's nowhere to hide. You must withstand the punishment for being unlucky and survive until you can find a warm place to heat the frostbite.

You can't remember how many times you were on the brink of death due to exposure. The numbness of hands, the overwhelming sleepiness... You must rest soon, or you may end up on the verge of death again.

6

You ignored wyrdness for most of your life. Sometimes it brought you nightmares, sometimes strange visions, but most of the time it just was. You were much more focused on the frigid weather, rapid snowstorms, and, of course, wild beasts.

It was a nice, sunny day, when you discovered the harsh truth. You were hunting a Tatter-Foal, an unsettling, malicious crea ture. You prepared a camp in the deserted village with strange, ice statues and a building with an ominous hole gaping in its side – some said it led to another world, but no one who tried entering came back.

You felt strange, but you put it down to surreal surroundings. During the night, you were awakened by a pain searing your in sides. Next to pain, you felt fear. You had to run from this place. The compulsion was so strong that you fled toward Mangrove Huddle. When you regained your senses, you discovered that your blood tried to leave your body in any feasible way – directly through your skin, ears, eyes. You were covered in blood, and it was glimmering, swirling, changing. With terror, you realized it behaved like the clouds of wyrdness around you, mimicking their moves.

7

The Black Drifter. First tales about this beast appeared around three hundred years ago. You studied them carefully, as you and your companions were often requested to kill the beast. However, you have never accepted any of these jobs. At first, the monster was smaller, around the size of a horse, according to the legends, but the more time passed, the bigger it got. Today, this monstrosity ruling Avalon's skies is the size of a tavern.

It haunts the places with menhirs more frequently than any others. It also frequents locations where powerful magic can be found. Some communities, like people from Forest Sanctuary, can defend themselves from its attempts to assault their settlement – you spoke with them, but they can do it only because they have twenty people on guard, day and night. Still, they never manage to hurt the beast seriously, so you didn't learn much from them.

Then, your companions decided that you can't wait forever. They wanted a challenge. You also got carried away, and you accepted the request from Mangrove Huddle to hunt the Drifter. It was a disaster. You alone survived. And now, you're yet again alone, wandering the wastes – not unlike the Drifter.

8

For the first time, you felt real dread. Wyrdness hadn't left your body after the fight, as it usually did. You looked at veins squirming inside your arm like tiny worms. The pain was horrible, but it didn't bother you at all – you were used to pain; it was the fact that wyrdness was doing something strange with your body that almost made you cry. Suddenly, a vein burst, like a tree trunk exploding in the cold. Your consciousness faded away.

You woke in a warm tent. You couldn't move your hand. But it was there, pulsating in agony, covered in poultices. A strange woman knelt before you quietly. When she noticed you open your eyes, she pressed a slender finger to your lips.

She tended your unusual wound in total silence, spending with you almost two whole days. She had a strange face – tight lips, small, almost non-existent nose, and her eyes were always closed. On the third morning, when you were able to stand without help, the woman started packing up her camp. You wanted to thank her and help, but she pressed a finger to your lips again and said, slurring: "I know." After these words, she left you alone. You didn't know why, but you felt safe – the only words she had said resonated in your mind, soothing your nerves.

9

You and your friend defended against a ferocious attack. It start ed as a hunt of a small wyrdspawn, but you soon learned this creature could change its shape and size at will. You were now in serious trouble, as the rest of your group was miles away, warming their feet by the fire in a hospitable Forest Sanctuary. Only two of you came here.

A mighty lash of the creature's tendril broke your friend's shield and arm. You lost a small chunk of flesh due to an unexpected bite. You both grew exhausted and desperate. You wanted to live, but your experience told you there was no real chance for victo ry here. Even if one of you sacrificed themselves to occupy the monster, the other one wouldn't survive the long trek back to the Sanctuary, with this creature in pursuit. The only thing you could do was put up a good fight.

But then, you felt something strange. A wave of hate, or maybe distorted tenacity, built up inside your chest, ready to burst forth. You embraced it and let it all out. Sheer power projected from your body toward the beast, stunning it long enough for you to drive the spear deep into its eye. Relief overflowed you, and you wanted to share the joy with your friend. But he was dead, bleed ing from ears and nose, killed by the same wave of force that confused the creature.

Since then, you studied your new power carefully, and always had in mind it could hurt your allies. You only wish the first lesson weren't that harsh.

10

You kneel before the menhir, the frigid air freezing your face and still body, and recall the memory of the battle with Black Drifter.

You'd prepared magical runes that should have bound the mon ster to the ground. You'd placed several traps that should have hurt the beast when it would attack you from above. You sharp ened your best weapons and brewed the most deadly poisons – you were sure you would win.

Then, Black Drifter arrived in its dark glory, allured by the menhir. It landed on your traps and runes – but spikes broke on its hard skin, and magic in the symbols was sapped by its aura. You, poor fools, attacked anyway. And you lost.

There were eight of you: two perished at the first strike of its claws, the third died as a sword, flung by this blow, impaled her chest. The fourth and fifth attacked fiercely, and wounded Drifter's leg, but then it smashed them with its wings, shattering their bones.

There were only three of you left, and the battle hadn't even be gun. You charged with your spear, two heavy knives behind your belt in case your main weapon broke. You don't remember what happened next – the next scene you can recall was the hawk pecking at your arm.

You cry, remembering your friends. Their faces appear be- fore you once more, and your heart succumbs to sadness. Loneliness and grief push away all other emotions. When you finally regain consciousness, you're freezing. You long to see the fellow wyrdhunters once more, but you know it won't happen. Avalon is a harsh place where all those who are not prepared enough die. It's not a place for humans or even monsters – it's hell. This place must change. Otherwise everything and everyone will suffer forever.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Echoes of Legends

Caolin

1

Long as you search you can find no more provisions in your bags and satchels. The food is gone, but for one small strip of salted pork. As you re about to chew into it in a futile attempt to dull the hunger, you notice a pair of eyes burning right in front of you.

Faol didn't eat for at least as long as you, and she is thrice your weight, all muscle and sinew. You realize that if your stomach twists painfully, she must be starving.

There s little light in her eyes now. The more hungry she is, the more of a beast she becomes, her natural, almost human curiosity and kindness replaced with more primal urges. You hate to see her like that. With a sigh, you hand her the last cut, and she devours it instantly.

As you look at her licking her snout, you realize you have to do better than that. Young and small as you are, you are responsible for her well being, not the other way around.

2

Fighting in tandem with Faol, even a mighty beast like that isn't impossible to beat – but you still remember your first encounter with a hellpig, one that nearly cost you your life.

The forest was misty that day and filled with sounds of dripping water. That s why you noticed the creature when it was only forty paces from you. You should have run – or climb a tree. But it would be a fourth hunt you came back from empty-handed. Other young hunters already started to joke about you. A large hellpig, killed all by yourself, would cut these japes short.

You took four arrows out of your quiver at once with a well trained move, nocked the first one, and started shooting. All four found their mark before the beast closed the distance and buried deep in hellpig's flesh, but the beast shrugged off the wounds. Soon, you found yourself desperately dodging its strikes, a hunting knife in your hand - not a good position to be in.

It was then a massive shadow pounced on hellpig's back and brought it to the ground in front of you. It was the first time you've seen Faol, and the first time she saw you, snarling at you to step back from her prey. To you, her first, miraculous intervention was always more than just a coincidence.

3

The cuts on your body itch, but you do not flinch. It's not the first rite of passage performed by the fires and pale moonlight that you experienced. Cruel as the ceremonies of Stagfather's followers are, they pale compared to one that you went through, a couple of years ago, in the hills of your ancestral homeland.

In your tribe, the only way to become an adult was to go through the Trial. You could attempt it at any time, but most people approached it between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Some never did. Becoming an adult wasn't necessary, though non-adults had no say in the tribe s gathering and could not own property other than personal items.

The ceremony was beautiful, full of songs and dancing, at least until the last part: the test itself, performed with a grass-woven glove filled with fire ants as large as a nail. A child undergoing the Trial had to put their hand in and keep it there for the rite's duration. One scream of pain was enough to fail.

Some parents cheated, feeding their younglings with fermented fruit or even numbing them with a poppy extract. Your mother never offered any help, and you never asked – as a daughter of the warrior queen, you could not dishonor her by cheating. You completed the Trail on your first try, even though the pain almost caused you to lose consciousness: once ants began to bite in, it felt as if your entire hand was being seared over an open fire, a pain radiating through every bone of your body.

Now, surrounded by the followers of the Stagfather, you risk a smile. They think of themselves as the toughest hunters to roam the earth. Yet, you're sure they could learn a lot from your tribe.

4

Is it possible to repair a bond that was frayed on both sides by anger and resentment? Once, you were an honored member of this tribe, a daughter of their heroic warrior queen. However, when you came back from the wilderness with a strange, giant beast at your side, trying to convince everyone it was, in fact, your mother, it didn't take long for attitudes toward you to shift dramatically. Other tribe members found your idea insane and even blasphemous – the warrior queen was now a part of the Eternal War waged in heavens. The idea that people could be reborn in different bodies seemed strange and barbaric, reeking of Pictish superstition.

You were not a person who gives up quickly. The more you tried to convince them, the more contempt they had toward you. There were whispers the wyrdness touched you, or that the loss of your mother broke your mind.

Unable to stand this any longer, you departed in anger. No one even said goodbye as you left the village. But now, your tribe begins to see how worthy you were. You wonder whether they'll come to regret driving you away. Maybe one day you will return to them? Maybe one day, the bond will be repaired?

5

I Entering this strange forest, your wolf behaves in a way you've never witnessed before. Faol whimpers, her tail hung low between her legs, her eyes looking erratically to the sides. For you this place seems just a bit otherworldly. She must feel something different. Something that scares her.

At first, you also feel the wolf's dread, flowing from Faol straight into your head, thanks to a bond you both share. Then, the fear lessens. Taking this for a good omen, you march on, and only after a while you look at Faol - and freeze.

The wolf looks back at you with a blank, puzzled stare, shaking, and even more scared than before. Suddenly, you begin to understand: her fear isn't gone. Instead, the link between you and Faol is getting weaker the further you wander into this forest. Born of the wyrdness, your bond seems to fail where there's no wyrdness around.

It is a very unsettling discovery that you will have to think about later. For now, you want to get out of this place as soon as possible.

6

You feel a strange rush, as all your attacks find their mark, driven with power that belies your small body. You wonder whether your mother is proud, and you instantly recall the moment you've seen her fighting like that – the last time you've seen her fight in human flesh.

It happened almost five years ago. The cold waters of the long, shallow bay were the color of steel, just like the silent sky above them. They would be smooth, if not for people ferociously fighting up to their thighs in the water.

In the thick of it was your mother, wailing like a red-headed banshee and felling her opponents with broad swoops of her clan-sword, two shieldmaidens protecting her sides. Beyond her, most of your clan tried to push seven laden longship into deep water. These vessels were filled with everything you had: animals, tools, provisions, the infirm, and the children. Anticipating trouble, you loaded the ships well off-shore, but even then they sunk so low their keels dug into the bay's bottom. Before you could push them off the shallows, the very thing you were running from appeared on the shore: a wave or raving madmen, covered in sores, dripping with diseased blood, destroying everything in their path, their mind clouded by the plague.

Your mother and your best warriors rushed forth to meet them in the cold water. You stayed with the ship. And now, just as you thought you re winning, another wave of attackers appeared on the shore. The ships swayed, finally free. Your mother turned toward you and gestured ships' captains to sail away. You screamed and opposed the order. You were not leaving her behind!

Then, she showed you her arms, covered in cuts, and sprayed with diseased blood. A sudden clarity froze you in place. None of those who came with the warrior queen to meet the diseased wasn't coming. They were to remain in Homelands.

That was the last time you'd seen your mother, fighting her last battle, vastly outnumbered, while your longships set sail and left the dying world behind.

It's no wonder gods have seen fit to give her another body and another chance after such a display of heroism

7

Only after the fighting died down, you realized there was only one arrow left in your quiver. You touched it with the tips of your fingers, thanking good fortune that the battle didn't take a minute longer than it did

You still remember the last time when you were down to one arrow. It was almost a year ago when you and Faol already had been experienced partners. That day, you came upon a young wyrm though it was still five times larger than Faol, and capable of crushing you with one move.

When you engaged, Faol immediately began her well-practiced routine. She kept the opponent occupied, jumping in and out of melee, biting, nibbling, and trying to create a good opportunity for you to shoot. Only this time, your arrows bounced from thick scales of the wyrm one by one. The combat dragged on. The wolf began to bleed from her wounds, but she didn't seem worried, and continued to harass the creature, while you stood there, your last arrow in hand, gripped by a sudden and terrible dread.

This emotion was almost new to you. You were taught never to fear for your life, but this did not make you invulnerable to the fear for your close ones. Praying to all the gods of this world and the underworlds, you loosened the last arrow that hit the wyrm right in its snapping maw and lodged itself deep in its brain.

Faol pounced on the twitching body with her paws, almost playfully. She probably never understood how close you came to death that day. It was when you realized two important things: how much you love her, and how her trust in you far outweighs your real capabilities.

8

Though your hands are weak and eyes droopy, you still hold the bow at the ready, looking into a tangled mass of leaves and branches. Coming from a tribe of hunters and gatherers, you were taught perseverance from an early age. A hunter who comes back empty-handed is a lousy hunter. If you give up because of fatigue or sickness, you will get hungry – and even more fatigued and sick, starting a downward spiral that can lead to a slow death.

You turn your sore eyes to the side, where Faol lies in wait, prepared to pounce on your signal. Resilient as you are, you can't match your wolf for patience. You've heard of wolves stalking a single moose for a week, or waiting days under a tree that some unfortunate traveler climbed on. Asking Faol to give you some of this strength, you resume your hunt.

9

Faol is the best companion you could wish for, but she remains a feral beast. More than once you had to pull her away from a farm animal she decided to eat, or a man who made a mistake of looking her in the eyes. You have long since learned to prepare before you entered any villages or outposts. You usually found a way to hide Faol nearby and trained her to stay put for a couple of hours, while you dealt with other humans. Or - if leaving her was out of question – you forced her to wear a short leash, though you had no doubt she could easily break it if she wanted.

Today, you were too exhausted to prepare. You marched into the settlement straight away, with the wolf at your side. The panic doesn't take long to set in. Soon, people run screaming, while your wolf bares her teeth at them. Mothers close their children at home; warriors grab their weapons.

You're too tired to care. The fact they are so afraid of Faol should keep you safe long enough.

10

After your recent arduous journeys and difficult trials, you're glad to be home. You hope to sneak back into the village unnoticed and unmolested, finding some old, familiar place to rest in. Sadly, this proves impossible

As soon as the guards see you, a strange commotion begins in the settlement. You instantly become wary. What happened? Have you wronged them somehow? Is this place out of bounds for you?

A large group of people soon comes out to meet you, including all three village elders. You wonder whether it wouldn't be better to disappear, but their friendly smiles convince you to stay put.

After a brief welcome, the elders tell you that the stories of you and your wolf, and all the incredible deeds you performed together, reached them even here. Even though they never submitted to Arthur, they are proud that a person from their small tribe advised the mightiest human king. Finally, one of them asks you a question that almost makes you choke.

They want you to be their queen.

There wasn't one in your tribe since your mother died. A queen is not a regular part of your society, nor is the title inherited. One is usually chosen in times of strife when there's a need for quick, decisive actions.

To prevent foul play, it was rare for a child of a previous queen to be crowned. Now, your tribe is willing to break this unwritten law, and for someone who has been an outcast no less.

You take some time to think this through but eventually you agree under one condition: you will be free to conclude your business in Arthur's court before returning to rule them. Unanimously, the tribe agrees.

Later that day, as a ceremonial crown of bones is put on your head, and you raise a ceremonial sword above your head, all while every tribe member shouts your name, you look toward Faol, sitting in a safe distance. Clearer than ever, you now recognize human emotion in your wolf: a great pride of a mother, watching her child succeed.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Duana

1

People usually reacted to you with hostility, even when approached with an open heart. Trying to win people over made you what you are now — a woman haunted by vile spirits and insidious whispers of ethereal advisors. At least these evil beings do not hide their true faces behind fake smiles and false words. If you strike a deal with them, they keep their word. That's more than you could say about most people you've met in your life.

You remember once lying on a heap of trash, broken wrist throbbing with pain. You had never felt anything like it in your life — you were only eight years old at the time. A woman, thinking you had stolen an apple, hit you with a tally stick with all her strength, and your fragile, young bones shattered. Then, she grabbed you by the hair, beat you, and left on a reeking pile of rubbish.

You prayed to Allmother — to Morrigan, to Cisonus — to every god you knew at the time. You wanted the pain to go away, you wanted to make the woman understand her mistake and return to apologize. Neither the gods nor your oppressor listened. As your wrist swelled, and you choked on fetid air, you felt pure, distilled hate for the first time in your life. All your wishes focused into a single desire — to make the woman suffer. Suddenly, a voice appeared in your head. It promised help. You were young, but you weren't stupid — you forced yourself to stand and flee.

Since then, the voice kept returning, in other times, in other places. Perhaps, it somehow knew one day you would say "yes."

2

You are tired, stressed, and you don't have anything to satiate the hunger of your tormentor. You just want to fall asleep and forget about all of this. But you won't be allowed to rest.

Your veins fill with liquid fire, the air takes on the fetid breath of a demon, your nails elongate into claws — the process of transformation is agonizing. Hateful whispers, shouts, words, pleas, curses, oaths reverberate in your head. You want to lose consciousness, but instead, you delve into memories.

At first, there were side glances and poorly hidden conversations — too quiet to discern the words, too loud to ignore. Then, nasty comments about your looks. The word "witch," said with disgust. You didn't know why, but you suspected it had something to do with your new advisor.

You decided to speak with it the next night — you smeared the floor with lard mixed with sheep blood, burned incense made of sagebrush and fly wings, and wrote the right runes with chalk. Dark mist gathered under the ceiling and shaped into a hideous apparition.

"Another wart to heal?" it sneered viciously, as always. "Disposing of tumors is much less fun than killing living beings. You should try it sometime..."

You commanded it to stop spitting poison and to answer your question. Why did people despise you? What had changed?

"You've changed. It's your fault," it said. "The way you scream when I visit you in your dreams is entertaining, but it can grind on the nerves. And your face? This ghastly burial mask you carry around the village? You've let yourself go, witch. And I'm only getting started."

3

With your magic, simple hexes, and knowledge of the runes, you could help cows deliver calves or cure a pesky cold. With the advice of minor spirits or demons, you could cure lung inflammation and even reverse the changes caused by the wyrdness. But there were always things beyond your power — the Red Death, people lost to wyrdness, beasts of the land, and other dangers. Your people grew accustomed to your help and treated everything you couldn't solve as your fault and responsibility.

Unfortunately, even though you knew they weren't right, you couldn't stop thinking about it. You knew you could do better. There was always more power to be gained — better, stronger allies on the other side.

It was a day of grief — a young boy died on your watch. Something was wrong with his heart, and you tried the best you could: a foxglove brew, the aid of his ancestral spirits, a complex hex to repair and regrow his ailing heart tissue. Everything worked — the heart was almost healed after many hours of grueling work. Then, boy's weak body simply gave up, and his heart stopped.

His parents blamed you. You knew they said it not out of spite, but out of sadness. Yet, you decided to do something with this. Later, at night, you entered a deep trance, wandering through the astral world filled with spirits, demons, and lost souls — each of them too weak for your purpose. Then, you heard the same voice that appeared to you when you were a child — a vicious, vile presence which made you shiver. How mighty it was! You ignored your instinct screaming for you to get away, and asked for a price. Things were never the same after that.

4

The loss of a friend is a devastating feeling, even if the friend is an animal. You remember the blood of your only pet on your hands. The poor cow looked at you with glassy eyes, as her life flowed out of a deep puncture on her side. You knew it wasn't the work of claws or fangs — the wound was clean, made with a sharp spear or knife. Your friend was killed because of you.

You took this cow in when she was severely sick with cowpox. You helped the animal by giving her herbs to ease the pain and discomfort, and used her ailment to make medicaments. You've heard numerous stories of witches and healers who could use blood of diseased animals to prevent people from getting sick. Now, with smallpox in nearby settlements, you decided to try it yourself.

It worked quite well — you didn't have to treat a single case of smallpox in your village. But nothing could last forever. Your cow was an object of many painful rumors and slanders. Finally, someone attacked it just to get at you. In your eyes, the cow was a martyr, living in sickness so that villagers could be healthy — and it died because of their ignorance and prejudice.

5

Since you've made a deal with the sinister presence from beyond the realm of the dead, you learned how to appease its hunger. Most often, a strong will and focus sufficed to push it deeper into your unconsciousness. When you were too tired to defend against its powerful desire to hurt you, a magical ward or a bountiful offering would be enough to repel it. But there were times you were unprepared. It always ended terribly, but the first time was the most terrifying experience of your life.

You've entered the state of sleep paralysis — the warm oblivion of dream didn't come, even though you couldn't lift a finger. Instead, the presence appeared. It greeted you with courtesy and started ripping your nails out slowly, one by one. You screamed, but the apparition didn't mind. Then, it made them regrow — only to rip them out once more. Later, it recited the names of all those you failed to help — and with all those names came the feelings they experienced during their final moments. The torture lasted until daybreak. You didn't sleep even for a moment. The presence disappeared with the first rays of sunlight, leaving a message written with your blood: "Do not disappoint me again."

6

Doing evil is simple, like knocking over a candle that burns down the house. But making even this small candle takes many preparations: you must raise cattle to make tallow, you must keep the bees and harvest their wax, you must weave the knot. It's the same with magic — even an easy hex that wounds your foe takes time to learn and prepare. But healing a wound takes a lot more energy, focus, and time — not unlike building a house.

For most of your life as a healer, you lacked the strength to make a difference. Sometimes, you made mistakes, and instead of helping, you made matters worse. But you tried again, and again. Rarely, when people accused you of evil intentions or simply offended you, you were tempted to turn your power toward destruction, knowing this way you could achieve so much more.

One time, you yielded to this desire. What a sweet feeling it was — crushing bones, making those two bandits kneel before you. But it did not end there. The presence in your head convinced you to kill the men. And to taste their flesh. And to gather their blood. And to steal their bones...

You returned to your hut, weak, covered blood, sick in your stomach. You had rare, forbidden ingredients for many months — all your deeds were, in the end, good for your people. It didn't change the fact you were a witch who murdered someone and bathed in their blood to restore your powers.

7

You're surprised by the smiles people cast in your direction. Do they ... respect you? Can they possibly see through your grim appearance and see a woman trying to help? You wish things were like that when you were a protector of your village.

Soon after landing on Avalon, your people discovered how cruel the island was — and you sorely missed the tools to help them, as none of the herbs that grew in the Homelands were available here. Simple ingredients like thyme or mullein became scarce treasures. You had to make hard decisions each time someone was sick: use the known herbs and deplete precious resources, or try something else, preserving medicine but risking uncertain results.

You remember a young woman who got sick half her face went limp, she slurred her words, and she couldn't walk. You knew she was beyond your help, but her mother convinced you to try regardless. You used up the last batch of herbs and magical plants from the Homelands, and, to your surprise, you succeeded. The woman regained the ability to walk and speak. But she was permanently weakened, unable to work the fields or help in the household. Her appearance suffered too — her fiancé broke up their engagement, and her family was forced to care for her.

For your efforts, you were scolded and forced to compensate the family for losing a pair of hard-working hands and a wealthy son-in-law.

8

Avalon hindered your progress as a healer and forced you to learn the way of blood.

As with every settlement on the island, your village was in constant danger from vagabonds, bandits, wild animals, unnatural beasts, wyrdness, and the Avalonians themselves. The village had some warriors, and sometimes hired mercenaries — but there were threats that couldn't be beaten back with a sword. You dispersed wyrdness, you drove away monsters, you helped failing crops. But instead of gratitude, your people started to fear you. Instead of inviting you for meals and ale, they closed their shutters. Instead of asking if you needed something, they looked the other way when you approached. It wasn't ideal, but you accepted this — they were at least safe, and that's what mattered.

9

The other side was cold — to not lose yourself to it, you had to spend vast amounts of magical power just to shield yourself. Unfortunately, wandering there was the only way to learn more about demons and their abilities. Of course, there was some written knowledge, but most of the tomes belonged to Merlin, Morgaine, or greedy priests. It wasn't an option for you. So, you searched for knowledge yourself, wandering the other side, shrouded in coils of magical wards. You — or rather, your essence compressed into a single, infinitely small point — floated through a void so cold it would freeze a flame in an instant, but your wards kept you alive. The sight was useless there. Instead, you felt your surroundings twisted pathways frequented by demons and other astral beings.

You exchanged information with them. Each time was a struggle, in which they ripped at your soul while you gained scraps of knowledge about them. Finding the right spirit was as easy as finding a needle in a haystack. Understanding them was as simple as understanding why things fall toward the ground or how wyrdness works. It was a struggle, a true battle of wills. Each time you returned to your body, you were exhausted, and you had more questions than before.

But you visited the other side every time you could, in a futile attempt to understand demons, the spiritual world, magic, and the nature of curses and diseases.. You gained the power to help your people. Still, in the end, they exiled you, ignoring your sacrifice. You still hope they survive without you. But deep inside, you hope they fail.

10

You finally return to your cradle, the place where everything began. You remember all the pain and suffering you bore for your people. You're not sure what to expect: will they attack you on sight, take you in like a lost child? Ignore you completely?

None of that. A ruined village appears as you emerge from the forest. Your old hut is burned to the ground. Wyrdness twisted most buildings into caricatures — turned wood into dung, replaced doors with windows, or embedded half living, half-dead people into the walls. The rest of the village is simply abandoned — people must have fled when something went wrong.. You don't feel sadness nor satisfaction — you don't feel anything. Maybe relief? At least you know there's nothing here you could possibly muss.

Then, you hear whispers — not inside your head, but somewhere around you, scared and sheepish. "Is she here for vengeance?" they say. "She hates us. We deserve it. Quiet she may hear us!"

You sit upon charred grass, close your eyes, and bite into the bone of a wyrdbear. You mumble a simple hex, and when you open your eyes, you see souls bound to this place. You recognize most of them — the people of your village, all dead. When they realize you see them, they try to flee, but they can't leave the ruins. Then, the ghost of a boy, the same one who died despite your healing efforts, approaches and apologizes to you. Encouraged by him, more souls draw near. They are sorry for everything only after death, they understood your sacrifice. As you can see, they couldn't survive without your help. But at least now, they can help you. They are weak, weaker than the least of demons you bind, but they are loyal because of their guilt. They swear to help you until your death, to repent for their cruelty, and then they will follow your guiding spirit to the other side.

Soon, you depart — once again the shepherd of your people, though this time no one but you can see them.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Naazer

1

There was a library in Al Iskandria that scholars came from a thousand leagues away to visit. No one counted the scrolls and tomes held in its cyclopean walls, older than the oldest living empire. Even the wing devoted to geography, that you visited most frequently, could rival any other library in the world for size.

In the dim light coming from the stained glass skylights (as no fire was permitted inside), you peered over the works of ancient geographers and fantastic accounts of their travels, full of strange animals, shocking customs and wonders of nature you very much doubted were real.

Yet, even there, the wonders and amazement pale against those you've experienced in just four years of traveling Avalon. Your leather bound sketchbook is now almost full of drawings depicting impossible landscapes and ancient monuments — and you haven't even been to the western part of the island yet.

Now, leafing through the pages, you begin to think how much of it can be attributed to the constant influence of wyrdness that permeates the island, creating vistas and places that couldn't exist naturally. But should their troubling origins dim your excitement? Your sense of discovery?

You close the notebook with a smile. For many, Avalon is a prison they never wanted. For you, it is the place you dreamed of when hunched over the scrolls of the Al Iskandria library.

2

The final threshold now lies before you, flanked by two rows of statues whose grim, piercing gazes you try to avoid. For the first time in your life, you're about to see what no other traveler has seen, a real unknown land. Still, you find it hard to muster any excitement. The landscapes of the Avalonian city are caustic, they eat through each other, like several watercolor drawings put together and splashed with water.

This is not something you — nor anyone, no matter their talent — could sketch, map or accurately describe. Frustration creeps in, as you realize the city of Avalonians is to remain an enigma. Any account you bring back from here will be no better than the ravings of a lunatic, or the words of a poet trying to describe his opium filled dream.

With some hesitation, you put your sketchbook away. You will make your account up when you return — everything you'll say of this place will be just as much true as false.

3

Being a stranger from a strange land at Arthur's court in Camlann wasn't easy. Every time you left the relative safety of the castle to wander the Golden Alley, or the upper plaza, you were met with scorn and hateful gazes. Your homeland was so far away that to many of Arthur's subjects you were the first person of your origin they had ever seen. The knights were no better. Though supposedly chivalrous and educated, they made cruel japes behind your back, more vicious than funny. Only the simplest sailors in the lowest district of the city showed you any respect. None of them had ever been to your land, but at least they saw your kind in remote ports. Though for them the fact that one of the "proud easterners" was now a beggar in their city was a source of smug satisfaction.

As for the king, at first you took his interest in you for morbid curiosity. Then, for pity over someone who could never return home and spent three grueling years on the trail, being attacked or robbed several times in the process. Only with time did you discover that Arthur Pendragon wasn't like that. He genuinely wanted to better understand you and your culture. A strange call compelled him to seek out everything obscure and distant, not unlike the call you heard yourself.

You wonder whether this is what eventually pushed him to set sail for Avalon?

4

It takes a lot to make your feet sore. After all, when your horse died, you walked for the best part of your forty-month long journey from Al-Iskandria to Camlann, through countless border kingdoms and desolate lands. The years spent on this odyssey changed you physically, getting rid of layers of fat earned during your palace days.

However, the feat you just accomplished was too much, even for you. You managed to conquer a distance that travelers and merchants usually need three days for, in just one day — sunrise to sundown. Over sixteen hours of very brisk walk, without any pauses or a moment of respite.

You're in pain now, but somehow it feels good. Of all the fights and conflicts in the world, you always preferred those fought against your own weaknesses.

5

You never wished to command soldiers in the field, nor to command anyone anywhere. You valued your freedom and found it difficult to deny it to someone else. Besides, despite the hundreds of pages you peered over in libraries and studies, you didn't feel any wiser than the simplest cobbler or cabbage vendor.

It wasn't until you saw how many men paid the highest price for the blunders and incompetence of Arthur's officers - most often highborn sons with precious little common sense, but with heaps of cruelty and bad attitude to compensate. To you, who read scrolls left by the most talented generals and commanders from the past millennium, many of the orders they gave their soldiers bordered on criminal. Besides, they were just as interested in fighting the Avalonians as in maintaining the illusion of their own power.

You finally snapped when you saw a young lieutenant executed for obeying a disastrous attack order that his commander decided to wash his hands of. You began to take command, as privileges granted by Arthur allowed you to. Strangely, the soldiers didn't seem to mind your accent or your skin hue. They were used to fighting for men they despised. And now, a veritable army stands at your back, putting their trust in you. Though you never sought it, power over other people found its way into your hands.

6

As the Pale Lady departs, you slowly wipe the sweat from your brow. Most travelers in need would simply accept her help and thank the gods for salvation, but you insisted on asking questions, trying to understand what she was to gain by helping you.

Perhaps it was a bit paranoid, but you've learned how dangerous dealing with supernatural powers is, and the capricious djinn of your land taught you that every offer comes with a cost, visible or not.

You still remember a story of a man who met a demon in the desert, while suffering terrible thirst. They made a deal: in return for a skin full of cold water, the djinn asked if it could take something the man had never seen in his life, a thing he didn't even know existed or belonged to him. The man gladly agreed. He made it to the nearest city and shared his story, but soon he began to waste away from a strange sickness that no doctor was able to cure. When he finally died, his case perplexed many scholars who decided to perform an autopsy. They discovered his spleen was entirely gone, as if cut away with razor sharp claws.

Now, thankful as you are for the Pale Lady's gifts, you can't help but wonder what this powerful creature will want in return?

7

It was expected of a noble-born man of your realm to know how to fence. The court in Al-Bahi was famous for frequent honorary duels, though most of them quickly turned into oratory affairs, with both sides fencing mostly with colorful words and elaborate arguments, between scant saber strikes. To allow you to participate in these follies, that were for some reason seen as an essential part of your culture, your father paid for a good fencing master.

This wrinkled, sinewy individual with the nose of a hawk approached you just like every other highborn student. He tried to teach you the bare minimum needed to collect his fee. But you had other plans. After several lessons, you discovered something calming in combat, it was yet another way to challenge your own weakness, just like long, exhausting treks, or days spent over mind melting treatises on algebra or alchemy. You decided to pay the teacher for extra tuition on your own, though not in gold, but in favors. You managed to procure for him an entry to the pleasure wing of the palace, where the shah's guests and esteemed courtiers relaxed in the company of beautiful odalisques of all races and genders.

In return, the man stopped sparing you and began to show you real combat, with all the dirty tricks and fast, vicious attacks he'd learned as a soldier. The one thing in particular that he ingrained

in your memory was: "Never take blows if you can attack instead" To this day, you're grateful for this lesson.

8

You always preferred to travel alone. In the journeys that eventually led you to Camlann, many a time you met a traveler, or a group of them, who were going in a similar direction, at least for the time being. Even though you always joined up it would be foolish not to, for the borderlands were dangerous you secretly wished for nothing more than the moment when you and your new company would part ways. The wild landscapes and lush vistas simply tasted better without the constant prattle in the background.

Here, on Avalon, you had to reevaluate your approach. Traveling close to the wyrdness was another beast entirely - you've heard the deadly silence with which a warped one or a wyrdbear emerges from the mist, or how the wyrdness itself suddenly changes direction and begins to cut off even careful travelers. You learned just how valuable it is to have another pair of watchful eyes around you

And now, yet another companion joins you. To your surprise, you find yourself hoping he will stay longer than all the previous ones.

9

Even though you fought with one hand tied behind your back forced to argue in a foreign language, and burdened by the natural dismay the people of this land feel as soon as they see the color of your skin you still managed to convince your opponent. The right words simply came at the right time.

Oh, how you wish it could have been the same that day, five years ago, when you stood in front of the shah's consort. After all, her accusation was preposterous. Grand treason? Yes, your lover was one of those who didn't come to the shah's chariot race, in protest over rough handling of a certain progressive scholar. Yes, you wrote a poem that could be vaguely interpreted as a voice of dissent. But isn't the meaning of the poem in the eye of the reader? Are people to be blamed for the convictions of their close ones? The trial seemed easy enough to win. Unfortunately, you underestimated how smart and bloodthirsty the shah's consort was. She made a rousing speech to the scholars and the judges, and you found your arguments falling through one by one.

The final judgment was just as shocking as your loss in this mockery of a trial: exile or death. You were so soured by what happened you seriously considered the latter, but finally, your dreams of adventures outweighed the despair. You set off with a horse, a mule and some meager possessions. Forty months later, you arrived at the gates of Camlann.

10

The rock formations of the Burren were very interesting for you to observe. The entire area seemed to be a giant river of basalt from some ancient era that has long since cracked. The cracks were filled with soil, carried by the wind, creating an uneven, patchy landscape: small strips of green fighting with gray rock.

You took out your notebook and began to make a quick sketch, while your companion carried on, never noticing you'd stopped. It wasn't until you heard the pained scream, you raised your head and noticed a robber, all covered in rags, assaulting them. You dropped the sketchbook in favor of a saber and ran as fast as you could, arriving at the last second, to deflect a blow that would end your companion's life. Then, you pushed back the robber with a series of well-coordinated blows and toppled them to the ground.

As the robber fell, his rags unwound, showing bronze skin, similar to yours. You let out a curse in the language of your realm, and your opponent scrambled to their feet, saying:

"God's grace and thanks to his prophet! I never knew I'd find another faithful on this cursed island."

Speaking so fast you barely understood him, he gave you a story similar to yours. He was a soldier who was hired as a bodyguard for some rich merchant, and – together with him – ran to Avalon. Since then, he was met with nothing but scorn, until eventually he decided to walk the path of a robber. He now asks you to join him - a duo that could grow if you find more people from your land.

You look toward your wounded companion. Even though they do not share your heritage, you feel more tied to them than to this man. Strange, considering you spent years desperately looking for someone from your realm.

When the man repeats his proposition, you shake your head and drive him away.

If you are to be the sole custodian of the knowledge, customs, and history of your empire, so be it. You won't spend your life in resentment, desperately clinging to the past. You help your companion up and soon you continue your journey. The landscape around you hasn't changed, but you feel something important has shifted in your soul.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action

Thebalt

1

A sense of pride warms your heart as you walk along the ranks of warriors, their red shields held before them. Though they look grotesque, you feel a kinship towards these more than any other soldiers, for they are also suffering men, marked for the Red Death. Like you, they have chosen to spend what limited, miserable life they have remaining to serve the kingdom.

Your wistful confidence almost gets the better of you, and you temper it with reality, as this is not the first time you have led Red Shields into battle. They were always the bait, always the front line. Fearful men whispered to the commander, sowing rumor that they would bring ruin upon the rest of the army, urging him to send them on suicidal missions. Some complained that keeping them separate to avoid others catching their sickness made them more trouble than they were worth.

Now, you see the same fear on some of the other soldiers' faces, yet you wonder whether this time might be different. You're the commander now, and you're also one of them. You turn to your other troops, your eye contact lingering on the most fearful.

"Look well at these men," you say. "See the grim resolve on their sore-riddled faces. These are men who have looked upon their doom and have chosen to march toward it with weapon in hand instead of withering away in pain and fear. They will not run, no matter the terrors arrayed against them. How many of you might say the same? Look not upon their banner with mistrust, but rejoice! Take heart that the Red Shields guard your fore, knowing they are a wall which will not break."

2

A shiver runs through you at the sight of the bay. Countless ships bound together with iron chains and anchored there like a great, floating island. The constant lapping of waves and creak of settling wood adds to the illusion, transporting you back to when you fled the Homelands. They are not pleasant memories.

Great as the fleet was, there was scant room for the clamoring hordes of people, all desperate to board. You secured passage, along with your wife and two children, and you recall gazing back at the harbor, still packed with people, as you sailed away. Your guilt soon became lost in the petty complaints of other noblemen with no appreciation for how lucky they were to even be aboard.

The cloying stink of sickly-sweet perfumes used to cover the odor of all those bodies packed together clouded your head. As did the constant bickering of those trying to gain advantage for themselves, many trying to bribe the captain for extra comforts or a larger area of floor to rest their head. When you first showed symptoms of the plague, you almost welcomed them to escape the frustration of nobles so used to buying their way out of discomfort, and now finding their fortunes of gold and gems worthless. The plague ship they moved you to, however, brought its own misery.

3

"Keep that guard up, boy!"

The master-at-arms acted as if he didn't notice your smashed thumb and the blood trickling down your scuffed hand. By then, you knew that drawing his attention to this fact would accomplish little.

You were astounded by the fact your father paid this grey-haired bear of a man a hefty sum in pure gold just to pummel you with a training sword every other day of the week. As a noble-born child, you found it hard to accept that your teacher ignored your flesh wounds or bruises, and wouldn't listen when you asked for a break. With time, you came to understand the real world is similarly indifferent to your wants and needs. Your master-at-arms taught you a valuable lesson, one that you would otherwise have had to discover in much more dire circumstances. Then, another teacher came, even more cruel, called the Red Death. This second tutor showed you how much pain a human being can take.

Now, standing over your defeated enemy, you notice several wounds you received in this combat. You haven't felt any of them until now; to your opponent, you must have looked like an undead monstrosity, shrugging off any damage.

Perhaps the lessons you received in your lifetime were too good?

4

The look of a fresh, red taint on your forearm paralyzes you for a moment. Unwanted memories return: the stifling air of the plague ship, filled with pained screams and the stench of death. The hospital decks were so low the caretakers had to walk around the sick bent in half, like old crones. What little air remained was stolen by the oil lamps. You were afraid of suffocating just as much as you were dreading a slow death from the plague.

You managed to push these memories into the deepest recesses of your mind, but now they return, stoking a primal fear. No! You won't go back there, to the choking miasmas of the hospital ship! You'd rather take your own life!

Then, as your head cools, you manage to convince yourself that the plague ship is only a memory. It was burned and sank off the coast of the island; a funeral pyre for those who succumbed to the sickness. And as for you, you now have a letter of safe conduct, signed and sealed by the king himself. Officially, you're already sick, a doomed knight sacrificing the rest of his life to make a difference. Even should the plague return to your body, nothing will change.

5

You stare after the knights, riding into the distance in their gleaming armor, every bit the image of hope and virtue from legend. But only on the surface, it seems. It's not your encounter with them that perturbs you, but the shattered illusion of what you believed the famed Knights of the Round Table to be. They were supposed to be the best of you, above the pettiness and jealousy they just displayed.

Some of your fondest memories as a child in the Homelands were of your father telling stories of the knights' great deeds, undertaking mighty quests atop their chargers. He held them in such high regard and you came to view them as the measure of what a man could be. So inspired by those tales, you'd strived to reach those knightly virtues and ideals.

Now that illusion is broken. You can scarcely believe you once wanted nothing more than to travel to Camelot and join their order.

6

It takes a long, arduous trudge through the stinking swamp before you finally set eyes on a tall, wooden stockade on an island. Your feet are sodden and your skin and hair itch from the clouds of mosquitoes that have plagued you since you entered the morass. When you heard of the asylum, you'd expected a house of healing and rest, not this dismal complex of buildings.

You struggle to believe that this is where they send the sick to live out their final days. There is no compassion here. As if the pain in the bodies of those with the Red Death was not suffering enough, this swampy hell would gnaw at their minds, as though designed to sap every last drop of spirit left in these poor souls.

As anger rises inside you, you see it for what it is: a place to ignore the problem, to contain it and its distasteful appearance out of sight. All without wasting more valuable land. This is no place of healing, but a prison, its walls as much to keep the sick inside as invaders outside. Should someone escape the guards and the walls, the swamp would kill them, its mud clinging to their steps, dragging them down like grasping hands to drain whatever energy they had left in their weakened state. All where the well folk didn't have to see it.

Gritting your teeth, you approach the gate.

7

The grunts and screams of battle suddenly turn to cheers as the last of the enemy breaks before your army. Watching your men raise their weapons to celebrate your victory, vindication washes over you. This moment proves you were right.

It was a year ago when you and another diseased knight journeyed to Tintagel to petition the king for the right to face death with a sword in your hand. You suggested that regiments be made of fighting men afflicted with the Red Death, arguing that, though your bodies were failing, you could still serve the kingdom. The other knights and nobles, however, saw it differently. They would have cast you aside to rot in some asylum.

When they claimed that you were weak and unable to offer any

military value, your temper erupted. So incensed by their doubts, you drew your sword and swung it in a wide arc, roaring as you cleaved the thick, oaken chair before you in half. Guards leapt to restrain you amid protesting knights, but the king silenced them. Glancing at the broken chair, King Arthur granted your wish, allowing you to form the Red Shields.

And now, with a vanquished enemy before you, you've proved your worth.

8

There is no remorse to the Red Death. Even when you're at the limits of your endurance, it still twists its knife, lancing you with waves of pain and suffering. As you lay down to rest, sleep comes in fits and bursts of throbbing pain and visions of your inexorable decay. Eventually, you fall into a delirious haze.

The early days of your sickness flash through your mind, an agonizing whirl of grotesque images. You see your bandages being removed, peeling off layers of skin caked in dried blood. New wounds open with each image, each with their own, new pains to distract from your existing ones. You see the gaunt faces of people dying around you, hear their groans resound in your skull. The onslaught is relentless, physical and emotional, taking you to heights of pain you never believed a man might experience.

Through the suffering, a light twinkles in the distance. You focus on it and feel it drape around you like a soothing embrace. It renews your strength, allowing you to endure. You emerge from your delirium as you often have; knowing that just as the sickness is the source of your physical suffering, it is also the source of your faith, bolstering your resolve and piety for the Allmother.

9

Over the flicker of campfires, your men cast dark glances your way. They whisper between themselves, though some don't bother to mask their unkind words which drift your way on the breeze. While you were leading them to victories, they called your strategies bold and claimed they'd follow you to any end. Now that times are harder, they call you reckless, that your sickness has given you a death wish, and you'll doom them all with you. They latch onto all the old prejudices and curse you for them; your nobility, where you came from, but mostly your sickness.

Another commander might have them flogged but that's not how you want to lead. You feel the loss of their friends just as they do, with the added weight of responsibility, knowing that you sent may to their deaths.

You consider what you've been through to get here, and your resolve begins to slowly grow. Prejudice is nothing you haven't overcome before, nor is defeat or hardship. You've even conquered plague and death. By the time you reach your bedsheets, your fiery ambition burns brightly again. Instead of ruminating, you start planning. You won't discipline your soldiers for their gripes, you'll inspire them with the great things you're yet to achieve together.

10

You've faced horrors and enemies and plague, and yet your resolve wavers outside a large tent filled with clerks. As the breeze stirs the canvas, you muster the courage to enter the Northpost Land Registry.

The tent immediately silences and all eyes follow you, though you refuse to falter under their stares. You approach the commissioner and present him with some parchment containing the deeds to your estates in the Homelands. With a steady voice, you demand your due for the fortune you left over the sea. The commissioner's eyes widen in horror and clerks buzz with excuses that nobody afflicted with the Red Death has claimed lands in Avalon. You still their confusion with a baleful stare, informing them that was about to change, citing the law that they clung to. You still draw breath and your title remains, therefore your right to compensation stands.

After a frantic search, and faced with your iron will, the commissioner relents and grants you a huge swathe of land along the northern coast. For now, it's covered in wyrdness but that takes nothing from the pride swelling within you.

You walk from the tent, standing tall and feeling vindicated. You've proven there's renown to be gained, even for the doomed and stigmatized. The lords of Avalon can no longer ignore the victims of the Red Death, imprisoned out of sight in their asylum, for one now walks among them as their peer.

Better still, you feel a happiness you've not known for a long time. Had you curled up and died on the plague ship like so many others, you would not have achieved so much. Instead, you will leave a legacy that will echo for generations.

Congratulations! You've finished all your Memories. Please place your Advanced Ability card next to your Character Tray. From now on, you can use it as your second Character Action.

Echoes From Beyond Time

Niamh

1

Why does it always end up like this? Is something wrong with the world? Or, maybe, with you? Each time you try to resolve a conflict by a peaceful discourse, someone blames you for being a fraud, fool, or liar. You don't deserve this! Or maybe you do? A vague memory or perhaps a vision of the future emerges from the depths of your mind.

You were young — very young. You had just earned your first coin plucking weeds from someone's garden and bought a fragrant sweet roll — dripping with honey and seasoned with rare spices. You sat on a barrel and started eating this delicacy. Suddenly, a guard hit your hand, knocking the bun into the mud. "You little thief!" he shouted and lifted you from the ground, to toss you next to the roll. "Don't steal on my shift, urchin! The next time I won't be so forgiving." Then, he crushed your fairly earned meal under his boot. You cried and cried. Something broke inside you.

The same night, you sneaked into the guard's house, slipped a viper into his boot, took his gold, and ran away. It was only fair, wasn't it?

The memory ends there. Was it really yours? Did you do that? Or maybe ... you will someday? Yet, you hope it was just your imagination.

2

A small fortune rests in your pouch. The way it taps against your thigh as you walk calms you. Yet, there is anxiety buried deep in your heart.

Each time you earned or stole money, it vanished — taken by lenders, bandits, thieves, or priests. You always had forgotten debts, obligations, or a powerful someone holding a grudge against you. You can't remember any details, they are all vague. You're not even sure if you wronged any of these people.

Then, one scene becomes increasingly clear. You sit in a chair in a great tent. Your henchmen report their recent spoils from the forest road, where passing merchants have two options: to pay you or die. Then, your most trusted friend presses a blade against your throat. "Change of leadership," he whispers. When you call your guards, he doesn't flinch, and they don't move. One says: "Everyone accepts your resignation, Niamh." They all laugh, except for one underling who tries to defend you, but his words are cut short with a blow from a heavy cudgel. "Don't show your face here ever again," your former friend says. "Take your filthy rats and piss off." You run — they take everything from you but your life. And you're almost grateful for that.

3

It's not the first time you've spent a night in town penniless and without dinner. You solved this problem so often that people instinctively don't trust you at first sight — and they are right not to, unfortunately. As you walk the darkening streets, your head floods with memories.

It was a market day. You were broke — a rather natural situation for you. You decided to pose as a storyteller. You donned a colorful cape, stood on a platform, and started fabricating stories. In the meanwhile, your trained rats were busy biting off listeners' pouches.

Another time in the same town, your clothes were tattered after a harsh journey and a storm you were lucky to survive. You begged on the street, and a good soul decided to take you in. The next morning, the same good soul discovered you had stolen everything valuable and fled.

And yet again in the same place, though in a different time, you wore merchant's garb — belonging to a woman you had robbed several days earlier. It was stained with blood, but still rather opulent. You took a huge loan to "get back on your feet" — but, of course, you had no intention of paying it back. It wasn't even your business, after all. When the poor woman arrived in the city later, she faced many problems because of you.

You try to shake these memories off, but they stick to you like a spiderweb. Are you such an evil person? Are those truly your memories?

4

They were always with you. Whiskers tickling your calf. Glimpses of brown fur at the corner of your eye. Sharp teeth crunching your bread. Rats — you attract them, and they like you. The feeling was mutual.

You will always remember (or maybe imagine, as you're not sure if it really happened) the moment your skittering friends saved you from certain death.

It was cold. The ground had been frozen for at least a hundred years. Or maybe it was just a long winter? You're not sure. But you were freezing. You craved fire, or a hot meal. You wanted to see anything that wasn't white or gray. Your hands were numb. Your mind — fuzzy. When they came, you were sure, your eyes were deceiving you. Dozens of rats, a whole swarm of brown, gray, and black pelts crawling under your clothes. They started biting you. You screamed in panic — you believed they wanted to eat you alive. You had heard stories about such incidents.

Even though their nibbles made you bleed, they stopped once you stood up and began to run. Finally, you found a shelter nearby, where a group of travelers were making a hot stew. You collapsed by the entrance and when you woke, people there tended your wounds and fed you, but there were no rats anywhere. The only reminder of their help was a countless number of small, itching wounds all over your body.

5

The pain is unbearable only for a moment — soon, it feels familiar. As if it's not your first time at the death's door.

A hazy memory returns to you. Your body melted in pure wyrdness, becoming a liquid puddle of agony, yet somehow, you could still feel and think for what felt like many years. Your salvation was a kind soul who lit a nearby menhir and destroyed you.

Many times, you perished under the sharp claws and fangs of beasts, but cold steel also killed you at least once. You realize you know all kinds of pain, death, and suffering. But how is it possible if you're still alive?

6

Being a vagabond is not a choice you consciously made. You were forced to leave human settlements so many times that it was easier to learn to live on the trail than trying to weasel your way into yet another farmhold.

What's interesting, feeding yourself in the wilderness didn't prove as difficult as you imagined, while at the same time, many farmholds and towns suffered famine — one harsh winter or flood sufficed to make everyone there starve. But in the forest, there was always a hare or a bush of berries to be found.

When people learned you were a wanderer, they often asked you how you could safely sleep in the forest or mountains, blissfully ignoring how often someone died in their own town: in a fire, on the street, or robbed and murdered. It was the same as with food — one person could easily find a cozy hollow or a cave to sleep in, but a community suffered as one.

Being alone is truly a blessing for a vagabond, even though it runs against many human instincts.

7

You see a smile on a passerby's face as she looks at you — when was the last time you saw such a kind smile? You look around and notice people don't avoid you, and some even nod in your direction. Do they tolerate you? Or even like you?

Deep inside your mind, you're sure you haven't always been hated. There were times when people looked up to you and came to you for advice. You have a memory of being a priestess of a god, the Allfather — being a woman in a men's order was strange enough, but they respected you and wanted you to be one of them. It was a small, peaceful cult trying to make the world a better place. It was the most pleasant time of your life.

But when you think about it more, nothing adds up — the weather was different than now, you don't have scars your supposed past-self had, people spoke in another manner, and you have never before heard of this "Allfather"... Were all of these dreams? But how could they be so vivid?

8

Menhirs have always been an important part of your life – or lives, if your strange memories are correct. Each time you light one, two opposing needs fight for your soul – wanderlust and a desire to have a home.

You settled down once. At first, it was a pleasant experience. You found a loving man, and together you built a cozy wooden cottage. He was a baker, and you worked in the field. But one day, a group of mercenaries came – they were looking for you. They showed an edict from some faraway place that wanted you captured, put on trial, and then likely executed.

You didn't know what these people meant – you were still young, and you didn't know life different from this. Your husband looked at the mercenaries with disbelief and tried to stop them. He died, punctured by three arrows. Then, something awoke inside you – and soon, all the mercenaries were dead, while you looked down in disbelief at your own bloodied hands holding two kitchen knives in a well-trained grip.

You left the village with a void in your heart – a void that you soon filled with death. And when you looked back, you didn't know if this was nothing but a dream or a real memory. Just like now – you don't know if any of this happened, or if it's just your morbid imagination.

9

Why do you bother killing those roaming threats? People whom you save almost never show any gratitude. They even blame you for putting them in danger!

One time, you noticed hammerbeak tracks near a defenseless settlement. You decided to hunt it before it snatched some cattle or hurt someone. The battle proved more challenging than you anticipated, and you ended up severely wounded. When you came back to the settlement, the hammerbeak's head in one hand and a gnarled staff for support in another, people threw stones at you, shouting: "You adventurers only bring monsters to our doors! Go away! You're lucky we won't kill you!"

You went back into the woods, where you fainted. A fever grasped you in its scorching cold hands, and the loss of blood made you delirious. You died soon after, or at least you think so. It would be strange to remember your own death.

10

You abandon yourself in a chain of mundane chores – at first, people are suspicious and don't want to trust you with anything important, but soon they give you more and more demanding tasks.

It's only noon, but you're already exhausted. Your arms are in pain. Hard, menial labor isn't something you're used to. However, it helped you forget about the ever-present feeling that something is wrong with you. Your mind is remarkably clear.

After the full day of work, when the people of this place start to trust you and sometimes even show honest gratitude, you feel strangely fulfilled. The memories that haunted you in the past weeks are gone. Negative emotions disappear – and you find a source of your foul temper and bad mood. It's a deep, scorching hatred toward yourself. It clings to your heart like a curse. It grips you with sharp claws, it tries to bleed you out, it wants you to die. And you feel that your death won't end this suffering.

All hope and joy you've found during this day are soon gone – and you hate yourself for it. It's no wonder others don't trust you if you can't even trust yourself! But you find single merit in this sad discovery. Now you know that pushing yourself to the limits for something worthy can make you forget your curse, even if for a moment.

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